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# SERMON LIII.

MARK XVI. 15.

*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

THIS is the commission which our gracious Saviour, just about to ascend to glory, was pleased to give his disciples. On this commission they acted, as their successors have done ever since; so that to this day we enjoy the unspeakable benefit of it, for "to us is the word of this salvation sent" Jesus Christ had come down from heaven to save sinners; he had employed himself most laboriously in preaching to sinners; he had laid down his precious life for sinners; he was now about to ascend to heaven to plead for sinners; and by this commission he is providing for sinners till he shall come again. Having received all power and authority to govern heaven and earth, he first employs this authority in appointing the ministry of the gospel; in providing the means of instruction and salvation to unborn millions; promising at the same time ever to support, comfort, and succeed his ministers; for "Lo! (said he) I am with you always, even to the end of the world, Amen." May this important promise be fulfilled to us, while we search into the gracious meaning of this divine commission!

We learn from this text that

*It is the gracious will of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the good news of his great salvation should be proclaimed to every human creature.*

It may be profitable for us, 1. To enquire into the import of the word *Gospel*, which comprehends what the ministers of Christ are to preach; and, 2. To consider the *order* here issued for its universal publication. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

The word *gospel* is so familiar to our ears, that we sometimes forget what it means. It signifies *good news*, or rather *a good message*; and it well deserves that name, for the gospel brings to our ears the best news that we ever heard. Now, good news, if it be truly such, affords us *information* of facts which we knew not before,—information of something *great*, in which we are personally concerned—information of something *good*, or it cannot be "good news;" and above all information that is strictly *true*. When all these things are combined, it renders a message *good news*; and all these are certainly combined in the gospel.

1. The gospel brings us *news*; news in the strictest sense; it brings us *information* of the most extraordinary things, and which we could never have known without it. Without the gospel who could have ever thought that the great God of heaven would have loved wretched sinners, or have sent his dear and only Son into the world to die for them? Who could have conceived that such blessings as pardon, reconciliation, adoption, holiness, and eternal life, should be the portion of ungodly mortals? All this is so strange and extraordinary, that the Scripture says of it, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him: but God hath revealed them unto us, by his Spirit," in the gospel. The world at large, and even the Jews themselves, before the time of the apostles, could have no just conception of this most sublime and glor[illegible] of [illegible]tion, as it is now revealed in the [illegible] we inquire into it, the more

will appear; for the gospel has this singularity, that, however well acquainted with it we may be, it is always new.

The gospel brings us tidings of what is *great* as well as new. Never did a message of so great importance salute the ear of man! Never was any report of equal magnitude with this—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!" The news of a decisive battle, of a glorious victory, of a general peace, may be great news, and greatly affect a whole nation for a time; but, compared with the great events which the gospel reports, they are trifles light as air, and trivial as the sports of children. The great things of the gospel affect, not a few individuals only, but all the race of Adam: they relate not merely to the present concerns of a single generation, but to the everlasting interest of every succeeding age until the end of time. Much of that news which inquisitive men are anxious to receive and to communicate, is of no real consequence to them; but the truths of the gospel are inseparably connected with our dearest interests; our life, our soul, our all, our everlasting all, is involved in them, according as we duly receive or wilfully reject them. We may say of the gospel, as Moses did of the law, "It is not a vain thing, it is your life!"

Good news necessarily implies that the tidings relate to something *good*, as well as something new and great; and the gospel is emphatically and super-eminently *good* news. Never were any tidings communicated by such dignified messengers as these. God himself vouchsafed to give the first intimation of them to Adam, when he said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Jehovah, in a human form, repeated the gospel promise to Abraham and the fathers. And when the Son of God entered into our world in human flesh, heavenly messengers, the Lord announced the grand event, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great

joy." Our Saviour put an eternal honour upon the gospel by preaching it with his own lips, and employed several successive years in the delightful business; and though it be now preached by men of like passions with their fellow-mortals, yet they are Christ's representatives, and beseech us in his stead to be reconciled to God.—Relief in the moment of danger, deliverance from threatening destruction, release from the horrors of confinement, supply in the time of necessity, may all be the subjects of joyful news; but neither these, nor any other possible occasion of human gladness, will bear comparison with the marvellous tidings of grace. And that which gives them a decided superiority above every information that ever gladdened a sorrowful heart is, that they contain *nothing* but good news, nothing to diminish the joy, or debase the tidings. The news of a great victory over an enemy is much diminished by reflecting that it has been acquired by shedding an ocean of blood; and that while we are triumphing in the important event a thousand helpless widows and orphans are bitterly lamenting their various miseries. But the good news of the gospel is unmixed, it is purely and entirely good, unmingled with any alloy. The gospel brings to our ears not a single word of grief or sorrow: and we shall best conceive of its nature by contrasting it with the law.

When the law was given on Sinai, the mountain burned with fire; and there were "thunders, voices, and earthquakes!" God was represented in all the terrible display of his holiness, justice, and awful majesty; and so deeply were the people impressed with terror and dismay, that they entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; yea, Moses himself, the mediator of that covenant, was not able to sustain the terrors of the scene, and he was constrained to say, "I exceeding fear and quake." And if people now were aware of the spiritual extent of the law, in its holy and just demands,

and of the dreadful displeasure of God, whom they have provoked by their sins, they too would be filled with terror, and beg that the law might not be preached to them any more, but the joyful tidings of the gospel.

Now, blessed be God, we, as Christians, are not called to hear the terrible trumpet of Sinai, "sounding long, and waxing louder and louder;" but we are called to Mount Zion, or the gospel-church, where the sweet and soft sound of the silver trumpet of the gospel salutes our ear, proclaiming good, the highest good, and nothing but good. So the Saviour himself began in the synagogue of Nazareth to utter the melodious sound. Unrolling the volume of the book, he read to this effect: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for the purpose to which he hath anointed me; for he hath sent me to preach good news to the poor: to heal those whose hearts are broken; to proclaim dismission to captives; the recovery of sight to them that are blind; and to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the welcome year of the Lord," the year of spiritual jubilee. While every eye was fastened on him, he proceeded to preach on the passage, and to shew its accomplishment in himself; when all the hearers were constrained to admire the graceful words which flowed from his lips. These words of grace continue to sound in the ears of all who listen to the joyful report of the gospel.

And that which renders these tidings completely good is—they are *true*; strictly true; divinely true. In eventful periods, when men are eagerly listening for information concerning some most interesting fact; too often some flying report reaches their ears, which, meeting with their wishes and their interests, is greedily credited; and, for a season, elevates their hearts with joy: but, alas! the next messenger, or the next post, contradicts the pleasing intelligence, and blasts all their joys with dis-

appointment and vexation. Not so the gospel of the blessed God. Not so the good news of salvation; for "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should change his mind." Every article of the gospel history was a fulfilment of some ancient prediction, and so gave a wonderful confirmation of its truth; and the numerous miracles which our Lord performed, crowned with his promised resurrection from the dead, left no room to doubt the truth of his gospel. The first preachers of these glad tidings confirmed them with infallible signs; for they healed the sick, and raised the dead. And the continual efficacy of the word in all succeeding ages, in converting sinners, and in sanctifying and comforting believers, is a standing and satisfactory proof that the tidings of the gospel are not only *news, great news,* and *good news,* but also infallibly *true;* so that he who believeth shall never be confounded. "Thy word is truth." "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Consider for a moment some of the glorious contents of the gospel, and it will surely be allowed that the tidings are great and good: consider that weighty saying of our Lord; a saying worthy to be engraven in letters of gold—*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Observe here, love—the love of God—the love of God in giving his Son, his only begotten Son—in giving him to his creatures—to sinners—to enemies, and that they might not eternally perish by his justice. How unparalleled, how inexpressible is this love! O the height, the depth, the breadth, the length of the love of God: it surpasseth knowledge!

Consider what the gospel reports concerning the glorious person, the gracious offices, and wonderful mediation of the Son of God. We justly call the history of these by the evangelists, *The Gospel;* for

every thing that it relates concerning Jesus is good news. What joyful information is it that "God was manifested in the flesh;" that "the Word, who was with God, and who was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The residence of a beloved monarch with a loyal people, affords but a low idea of *our* blessedness, since God, in very deed, hath condescended to dwell with man upon the earth. The people of Israel were happy in having among them such a *Prophet* as Moses, with whom God spake face to face; but far greater is our felicity who have Jesus for our instructor; and who, by his word and Spirit, still makes us wise unto salvation.

The *Priests* under the law were a blessing to the people, when, as their representatives, "they offered gifts and sacrifices for their sins:" but "let us consider the Apostle and High Priest of *our* profession," who has, once for all, offered *himself* as a propitiation; has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; has made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; and now appears in the presence of God for us, where he ever lives to make intercession, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

The triumphal entrance of a victorious *King* into the metropolis of his empire, after the destruction of his enemies, hath sometimes made the air to ring with the acclamations of his joyful subjects—"Rejoice greatly, [then] O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold *thy* King cometh unto thee: he is righteous, and having salvation;" "and he shall reign for ever and ever"—"The Lord God omnipotent." He has conquered sin, Satan, the world, and death; "and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. Amen."

The rich and solid *blessings* procured for the people of God, and proposed by the gospel of Christ, are so immensely great, as to entitle it to the name of good news. Here is *pardon!*—"and pardon for infinite offence!—and pardon by means that speak

its value infinite! a pardon bought with blood!" We can scarcely conceive of news more welcome than that of free pardon to a guilty criminal, condemned to suffer death; and this is precisely the blessing of the gospel—"Let repentance and remission of sins," said the ascending Saviour, "be preached to all nations." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to the children of men." —"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

*Victory* over a bloody, tyrannical enemy, is a cause of the greatest exultation! How joyful the abolition of spiritual slavery! How glad those tidings—"Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace!"

How joyful the news, that God will receive us into his family, and treat us as his own beloved children; that he will be our constant guide through this dreary wilderness; that he will protect us from danger all our days; that he will contrive to make all things work together for our good; that he will not suffer even death to hurt us; but render us more than conquerors over it; and that he will make us unspeakably happy and glorious in his own immediate presence for evermore! All this, and much more than this, the gospel reports; and is it not then "glad tidings of great joy?"

But we must hasten, in the second place, to consider the *Order* issued by the King of Zion for the *universal publication* of this good news, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

Before this commission was given, the knowledge of the true God was confined, in a great measure, to the Jewish nation; and the religion, established among them by divine authority, does not seem to have been designed for general adoption. Our Lord thought proper to confine his own labours

to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: and he prohibited his disciples from going among the Gentiles. But now the happy time arrived, when that great mystery, the calling of the Gentiles, should be unfolded; when the partition-wall, which separated Israel from all the world, was to be broken down; and when all the former distinctions were wholly to cease; that so, in Christ Jesus, there might be "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; but Christ be all, and in all" sorts of people.

That general expression in our text—*to every creature,* is very singular;-doubtless every *human creature* is intended; and the expression seems designed to prevent any restriction or limitation whatever, in preaching the gospel. The Gentiles were heartily despised by the Jews, and accounted little better than dogs: pride had taught some civilized nations to look upon all others as barbarians: and indeed many of the inhabitants of the earth were sunk so low in brutality, as scarcely to deserve the name of *men.* But our Lord would meet all the objections that could ever arise on this account: "preach the Gospel *to every creature;*" make no distinctions of civilized and uncivilized; of white, red, brown, or black; but go into all nations; into all the world; and wherever you find a human being, however base, rude, or vile, preach my gospel; publish the good news of salvation for him, through faith in my blood.

But the expression, "preach the gospel to every creature," is full of divine encouragement to the chief of sinners, *as sinners;*—to sinners of every degree and description. And herein it totally differs from the law. The law spake good only to the *righteous man;* it said, "the man that doth it (doth it *all,* and *always)* shall live by it:" but the law hath nothing good to say to the *sinner.* On the contrary it saith, "Cursed is every transgressor:" "The soul that sinneth shall die." But the gospel is on

purpose for sinners; it is justly called, "the religion of a sinner," nor is one word of it rightly understoood, till a man sees that "*sinner*" is his own proper name.

When Jesus was upon earth, such was the encouraging tendency of his preaching, that multitudes of poor abandoned sinners flocked to hear him; and many of them received pardon and grace: but this was turned to his reproach. Self-righteous people, who were proud of their own religion and virtue, were grievously offended, and gave him this character, "a friend of publicans and sinners;" and so indeed he was, though by no means a friend of sin, as they basely insinuated.

When the apostles, acting under the commission in the text, first preached the gospel at Jerusalem, many of the *murderers* of Christ were among the first converts. St. Paul himself had been, before conversion, a bloody persecutor; but having obtained mercy, he holds himself up as a *pattern* to the chief of sinners, that no man who hears the good news of the gospel should give way to despair. No, "Jesus came to seek and to save the lost;"—"he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The gospel is addressed to sinners, *as sinners;* and offers pardon to all who hear it. It is a great mistake, but very common, that sinners must first find some worthiness in themselves, by way of a condition of obtaining mercy: they must first be deeply humbled, and reform their lives, and then they may believe in Christ. But it is plain that this is looking for pardon as *saints*, and not as *sinners*. Whereas the truth is, that God, in the gospel, *justifieth the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. (not that those whom he justifieth, remain ungodly *after* they are justified; God forbid!) but they are justified *freely*, by his *grace*, without any respect to godliness, and notwithstanding their *ungodliness;* and that they may become godly: and thus it is, that "where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound."

## CONCLUSION.

And has the Lord of all issued this gracious order, that his good news,—his gracious message, should be published to every creature? Then it follows, of course, that it is the duty of every creature, where it is published, to *hear* it. It is Christ himself that speaketh from heaven, wherever the gospel is spoken; and the command of Jehovah is—"This is my beloved Son, hear him! hear him! hear him!" Yes, fellow-sinners, "to-day, if ye will hear his voice;" "while it is called to-day; hear, and your souls shall live." Open your ears to the good news. Shall this be the only good news that you refuse to hear? When profit or pleasure calls, you are all attention; but in all your lives you never heard tidings so good as these. The blessings proposed by the gospel are such as you greatly need; such as you must perish without; and the hour will come when you will *feel* your need of them. O that it may not come too late, when the door is shut! Your time may be short. Delays are dangerous. And know this, that if you do not welcome this *good news*, you may expect *bad news:* and the verse after the text tells you what it is, "*He that believeth not shall be damned;*" and how justly will they be condemned who refuse to be saved! If we reject the invitation of Christ to the gospel-feast; and, for the sake of the world and sin, desire to be excused, we shall provoke him to say, "none of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." Yea, there is worse news still; hear it. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh," &c. Prov. i. 24. As yet, however, the gospel trumpet sounds. O that you may hear and live!

Christians! is the gospel good news? Rejoice in it then; let the frame of your spirit correspond with the nature of the message. Why art thou cast down, O believer; and why is thy heart disquieted within thee? Is there a dejecting word in the gospel? No, it is *all* good news. You cannot have a want but it supplies; you cannot have an enemy but it disarms; you cannot have a fear but it repels. Reflect not on the gospel by a gloomy walk; let your neighbours read the good news of the gospel in your cheerful countenance and holy life. Angels rejoiced when they first published it, and still rejoice when a sinner receives it: ministers rejoice that they have such precious tidings to communicate; yea, Christ himself rejoiced when it was preached by his disciples with success. What cause then have *you* to rejoice!

When good news is received, we are eager to tell it to our friends. Now, are there not some of your neighbours, your friends, your relations, who never heard it; never regarded it? O pity them; pray for them; and tell them the news; tell them that "Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners;" put a religious tract into their hands; invite them to go with you to hear the gospel preached; and who can tell but God may be gracious to them?

# SERMON LIV.

MATT. XIII. 18.

*Hear ye therefore the Parable of the Sower.*

THE preaching of the gospel is an ordinance of God; it is a sacred appointment of heaven for the most important purposes: it is the mean generally employed for the salvation of men, for "it pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

But all are not saved who hear the gospel; it has very different effects on different persons; and it is the design of this parable to point out those different effects. Our Lord here compares the minister of the gospel to a husbandman, the world to a field, and the word of God to seed-corn. He supposes some of the seed to fall upon a hard beaten path; some of it into a shallow soil with a rocky bottom; some of it near the hedge among weeds; and a part of it into good ground, where it remains, springs up, and comes to maturity. By these different circumstances he describes, with wonderful beauty and propriety, the various hearers of the gospel, some of whom are careless and inattentive; others make a showy but short profession; others lose all the benefit of the word by their worldly-mindedness; while others, by the special grace of God, receive and retain his truth, and bring forth abundance of fruit to his glory and their own salvation.

Let us then address ourselves to the serious consideration of this excellent parable, which we may do with the greatest pleasure, as we are sure not to

mistake its meaning; for our Lord was pleased to give an interpretation of it to his disciples; and this shall be our guide.

1. Let us first consider the *careless hearer.*

In a field it often happens that there is a road or foot-path lying across it; and in scattering the seed it is likely that some of it may fall on this path, which, being hard and beaten, is not fit for the reception of the seed; it lies uncovered, and is soon trodden down by the foot of the passenger, or picked up by the numerous birds which generally hover about a field when it is sown.

This is a natural and perfect picture of a very numerous class; probably of far the greater part of hearers. Their hearts are totally unprepared for the word; not at all ploughed up by godly sorrow for sin; but hard and impenitent, so that the gospel makes no impression upon them. They come to the house of God without having prayed at home for his blessing; without any spiritual desire to be profited; and without a wish to know and to do the will of God.

Such persons are usually *inattentive:* they sit like others who listen to the word; but *they* do not listen; their thoughts are otherwise employed. Their eyes are surveying the congregation; observing who they are, and how they are dressed: for many go to church either to see or to be seen; and take such notice of the apparel of their neighbours, that it becomes a fruitful topic of discourse at home or in company.

The *preacher* is sometimes the object of attention, but not his *message.* They notice his person, his voice, his attitude; and perhaps make some critical remarks on his sermon; or notice a sentence or two which happened to catch their attention, while a train of vain thoughts occupied their minds.

It is astonishing to think how commonly the imagination is suffered to carry away the hearer

from his proper business. Instead of a serious regard to the divine and interesting truths which the minister delivers, the careless hearer indulges his mind in the contemplation of schemes of worldly business; or he is pursuing some plan of future pleasure and amusement; or, what is still worse, allowing some speculative abomination to defile his heart, even in the presence of God. On these accounts it may be feared that, in the view of the omniscient Searcher of hearts, a place of worship is sometimes a scene of greater wickedness than any other upon earth, and more provoking to his pure and holy eyes; for "he is not deceived, and will not be mocked." O how many may adopt the confession of the wanton person in the Proverbs, (ch. v. 12.) "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation!"

On these accounts it is, that many persons present at a sermon can hardly be said to *hear*. What our Lord says of the Jews (ver. 15.) is awfully true of them, "this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest, at any time, they should see with their eyes, *and hear with their ears*, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Some are willingly and wilfully ignorant; they shut their ears against the voice of God; and, though they attend upon sermons, yet never hear them. A young person, who attended the ministry of the gospel all her life, confessed on her dying bed, "that *she never* HEARD *but* ONE *sermon*," which was the last before her illness. It was charitably hoped that she then heard to purpose and died in the faith of the gospel. But throughout all her former days, such was the vanity of her mind, that, though she was present under many hundred sermons, she never so attended as

properly to *hear* one of them; and doubtless this is exactly the case of a great number among us.

It is said of this sort of people (ver. 19.) that they do not *understand* the word, and that this is one cause of its unfruitfulness. It cannot be expected that persons who are so inattentive should understand it. The truths of the gospel, though sufficiently plain and easy to the serious Christian, yet require the exercise of our rational powers; and if persons are too idle to bestow this, they must remain in darkness and the shadow of death.

Another cause assigned for the failure of the seed in the way-side hearer is, that *Satan cometh immediately and catcheth away that which was sown;* just as the birds pick up the grains of corn which lie uncovered on the beaten path; and this he does, *lest they should believe and be saved.*

Satan, who is justly called "the wicked one," as being himself wicked, and the promoter of wickedness in others, is well aware of the great importance of hearing the word aright: he knows that if it be seriously regarded, understood, remembered, and mixed with faith, it becomes "the power of God to salvation;" it is therefore a great point with him to prevent its efficacy; and the surest way of doing this is to divert the mind from it immediately. This great enemy has certainly access to our minds; we cannot say in what manner, but we are sure, from the word of Christ himself, that so it is. He certainly exerts his powers to keep people from hearing it; or to excite their prejudices against it; or to prevent a due recollection of it afterwards; and in either of these ways he succeeds.

It is truly affecting to think how entirely the most precious truths of God are lost upon many persons: there is not a single trace of them left on their memory; they take no pains to remember what they have heard; or if the text, for form's sake, be recollected, this is all; a story or a tale, however idle, is not so soon forgotten; but that

word, "which is able to save our souls," is lost in total oblivion.

One cause of this is, that such hearers are strangers to *retirement* on the Lord's-day; instead of entering into their closets, and praying for a blessing on the sermon, they take a walk for amusement, where every new object diverts the mind from what they have heard. Visiting on Sundays has the same pernicious tendency, for the conversation is generally on trifling subjects. It is thus that Satan steals the word from our hearts; it is thus that thousands of good sermons are lost; yea, it is thus that thousands of immortal souls are lost—for ever lost!

2. We proceed in the *second* place to consider the character of *the temporary hearer*, or, as some have termed it, *the enthusiastic hearer*; that is, the person who hears the good news of pardon, life, and glory, with a transport of joy; feels his natural passions elevated; but, having no root of humble conviction and genuine love to holiness, endures but for a time; for when affliction or *persecution* ariseth for the word's sake, he is offended, and falleth away." This sort of hearer is figuratively described by that portion of the seed which fell on stony soil, or on a rock covered with a shallow bed of earth. Here, though it might spring up, and quickly too, yet, having little or no root, and no depth of soil to supply it with sufficient moisture, it was scorched with the burning sun, and withered entirely away.

This sort of hearer differs much from the first. He is not inattentive; he is not indifferent: he hears what is said, and hears it with pleasure; he is *forward* to hear; he has warm and lively passions, which are suddenly affected with the novelty and grandeur of gospel truths, especially if delivered with zeal and pathos; he is mightily struck and charmed with his new religion, and becomes a warm, perhaps a violent, advocate for it.

The facts and truths reported by the gospel are indeed great and glorious beyond expression. The divine perfections—the immortality of the soul—the miserable condition of a sinner—the love of God—the sufferings of Christ—the pardon of iniquity—the felicity of the heavenly world, are all subjects of a very striking and affecting nature. If these are preached in an animated manner, the hearer who is divested of prejudice, and who possesses a warm and lively imagination, is immediately struck and moved; the preacher is unto him "as the lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on a musical instrument:" he is charmed and delighted, just in the same manner as he would be at a well-performed play, and with just as much religion. His conscience accords with the great truths he hears; and, prompted by self-love, he flatters himself that he has become, all at once, a very good Christian, and has an interest in all the blessings which he hears described.

But this shallow professor *has no root.* In other words, he has no true understanding of the doctrines of the gospel, especially as they relate to his condition as a sinner; he has no humbling views of himself, as a guilty creature, exposed to divine wrath, and utterly unable to help himself. He hastily receives some crude notions of the gospel, taking all he hears for granted; but his judgment is not informed; his heart is not humbled: his will is not subdued; his affections are not sanctified. He has no genuine faith; his new opinions of religion are not derived from the testimony of God, but from that of man. He has a prodigious esteem for his favourite preacher, while, probably, he despises all others; and the whole of his religion is *public,* consisting chiefly in hearing many sermons; while he is a stranger to meditation, self-examination, and private prayer; and appears to be under no influence of godliness in his life and conversation.

Can we now wonder if such a profession be short-

lived? If this be all his religion, it cannot last long. There is *no depth of earth;* and, as a feeble plant with a long stalk, and little root, in a shallow bed of mould, must soon wither if exposed to a hot sun, so a profession of this kind, if assaulted by persecution, will quickly come to nought; like Jonah's gourd, which sprang up in a night, and perished as hastily beneath a scorching sun.

In the early days of Christianity the disciple of Christ was almost sure to meet with violent opposition; both Jews and Gentiles exerted all their powers to suppress the religion of Jesus. Thus the profession of his disciples was soon brought to a fiery test; and where there was no root, apostacy would quickly ensue. The same trial of faith has been the lot of many christians in different ages of the world; nor are *we* to expect a total freedom from it now. We live, it is true, in a christian country; but faith must nevertheless have its trial; and "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus" must have a portion of "persecution." If we are serious, sincere, and consistent in our attachment to the truths, ordinances, and people of God; if we are determined not to comply with the fashions and vanities of the world, we shall meet with opposers; and if these should arise among our near relations, and persons of influence on whom we depend, our profession will be tried to purpose: if there be no depth of earth, this hot sun will wither our sapless stalk, and we shall quickly become barren and unfruitful.

Indeed, where no such heavy trial as this befals us, circumstances the most trivial may be sufficient. An offence taken with the minister for his supposed personality in preaching, or at his want of sufficient respect and attention to his hearers; a wholesome reproof given in public or private; the exercise of godly discipline in a Christian society; or even a dispute with a fellow-member, a disgust taken about a seat in the church or chapel, or some-

thing else just as trifling, shall prove a cause of offence, and the temporary professor lay aside all his religion.

There is a *third* sort of unprofitable hearers, next to be considered; this is *the worldly minded.*

Our Lord compares these to *the seed which fell among thorns;* these *thorns sprang up with it and choked it,* so that *it yielded no fruit;* that is, this sort of hearers so far embrace the word as to make a promising profession of the gospel, and afford some good appearances of reformation by it; but, through "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of life, and the lusts of other things, it becometh unfruitful."

As the second sort of hearers went farther than the first, so this third sort goes farther than the second; and yet not far enough to be profitable hearers, or real Christians. In the first case, negligence was the bane; in the second, want of principle; in this, the love of the world. Carelessness ruins many; persecution oversets others; prosperity destroys the rest.

*Anxious cares* are here compared to thorns, and indeed very justly, for both are the fruits of sin; the pricking thorns in the hedge are fit emblems of corroding cares in the heart, and nothing more effectually hinders the success of the word. Some degree of care is necessary for the proper management of our lawful affairs; but the cares of this life are apt to become immoderate and hurtful: they wholly engross the time, even that part of it which should be devoted to the more important concerns of eternity; they occupy the thoughts, which should be directed towards spiritual objects; they unfit the mind for religious duties, distract the heart in them, and prevent suitable reflections after them: they quench useful impressions when actually made, and glue the affections to the sordid things of this world,

"*Deceitful riches*" also choke the growing word, and hinder its fruits. Riches are called deceitful, because they delude the possessor, as well as the spectator, with a false appearance of happiness; for the real happiness of a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of his possessions: but they deceive in a worse sense; they lead the possessor or the pursuer of riches, to put off from day to day the vast concerns of his soul, under the pretence of the pressing affairs of this world, and so cheat him out of his salvation. Thus many persons "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition!"

"*The pleasures of life*" ruin many others. Some pleasures are lawful, others unlawful; but even lawful pleasures, immoderately pursued, are destructive to the soul; and those who are not distracted by cares, nor deceived by riches, may be seduced by pleasure. When it becomes the chief business of life to gratify the senses, to indulge the eye with every curiosity, the ear with the most enchanting sounds, the taste with the choicest delicacies,—then men become "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." A life of sensuality and voluptuousness is inconsistent with the life of faith, which requires humility, self-denial, and mortification; it steals away the heart from God, deprives men of all vigour and zeal in religion, and utterly prevents their producing perfect fruit.

Thus have we taken a view of three sorts of persons, in each of which the proper effect of the word of God is hindered—the careless—the temporary—and the worldly hearer. These, alas! are too numerous; and where is the congregation in which all these kinds of hearers may not be found? Yet, blessed be God! it is not thus with *all* who hear the gospel. There is one more description of persons which may be called *sincere hearers*, who happily escape the preceding mischiefs, and who bring

forth the good fruit of substantial holiness in various degrees. These are described in the parable by *the seed which fell on good ground and did yield fruit; some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred fold;* and these, as our Lord explains it, are they *who hear the word, and understand, and receive it, and keep it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

The good ground represents "*good and honest hearts*;" that is, hearts renewed by the Spirit of God, and which receive the doctrine of the gospel with a sincere faith, and an upright desire of improving it to all the practical purposes for which it is designed.

These persons are said to *understand it; to receive it;* and to *keep it*; all these are necessary to fruitfulness. 1. They *understand* it; none of the rest are said to do so; and indeed none can, till the Lord the Spirit open their understanding to understand the scriptures. God has promised that all his children shall be taught of him; that they shall know the truth, and that the truth shall make them free.

2. They are said to *receive* it; they see the beauty, propriety, and divine excellency of gospel truth, and embrace it with the most cordial approbation; receiving it, "not as the word of man, but as the word of God."

3. They *retain* it; it is not stolen by the birds of the air, but lodged in the memory, as a sacred deposite. Thus David says—"Thy word have I *hid* in my heart that I might not sin against thee;" and, in another place, he says, "I will never forget thy precepts."

4. They *practise* it, for "they bring forth fruit to perfection;" that is, the grain arrives at a state of maturity, which it did not in any one of the former cases. The way-side hearer brought forth not a single blade; the stony-ground only a stalk, which was soon burnt up; and the thorny ground

only a lean withered ear, empty of grain: but here the full design of the farmer is answered; and the single grain sown in the earth produces a number of grains of the same nature with the seed, and thus crowns all his labours and all his hopes.

The proper fruits of the word as sown in the heart are, *piety* toward God, *benevolence* toward men, and *temperance* in the government of ourselves. The whole is expressed briefly by St. Paul, when he describes the effects of the gospel; "it teacheth us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world."

But it must be observed, that this genuine fruit is not produced in every real Christian in the same degree—"some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold." Some begin to serve the Lord betimes; and, therefore, in the course of many years, have greater opportunities than those who begin late. Some possess stronger mental powers; occupy a superior station in life; enjoy greater opportunities of usefulness; a sweeter or a more active temper than others; and, by the divine blessing on these and other advantages, bring forth a larger proportion of fruit than others. But it should be the prayer and endeavour of all to be as fruitful as possible; for "herein is my Father glorified," said our adorable Master, "if ye bring forth much fruit."

And now, what shall we learn from this excellent parable? Take the sum of its instruction in a single sentence—a sentence pronounced by our Lord himself, immediately after it—

*Take heed, therefore, how ye hear!*

Indeed this is no trifling matter. *We* may forget sermons, but *God* will not. If he will call us to account for idle words spoken by ourselves, can we suppose he will require no account of his own holy word spoken to us? Oh, it is a dangerous thing to trifle with the gospel! It will be found

at last—"the savour of life unto life," or "the savour of death unto death."

Beware, then, of resembling the *way-side* hearer. Go not to the house of God in a gay inconsiderate spirit; nor behave there with irreverence and inattention; it is an insult to heaven, and an injury to your own soul. Beware also of the birds of the air, when you leave the church. Disappoint the watchful enemy of souls, who waits for your destruction; retire, recollect, and pray over the sermon.

Dread the thought of being a *temporary* hearer. Be not satisfied with the emotion of your passions under the word. Be concerned to have "the root of the matter" within you; that so, in the hour of temptation, you may be able to stand your ground, and not "draw back to perdition."

Beware of a *worldly mind.* Anxious cares, deceitful riches, and carnal pleasures, choke the word and render it fruitless. But will you place these in the balance with the glory of God and your eternal welfare? Oh, be wiser!—and remember that weighty saying,—"What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?—or what shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?"

Finally. Let it be your constant study and prayer to be *sincere* and *fruitful* hearers. Endeavour, by a serious, diligent attention, to *understand* the word; by the exercise of precious faith cordially to *receive* it; and by private meditation and prayer to *retain* it; and by daily observation to bring it into *practice.* I close with the words with which our Lord himself closed the parable—"And when he had said these things, he *cried,*" probably with a louder voice than before; and O that the cry may reach our inmost souls!—"*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!*"

# SERMON LV.

ACTS xvi. 14.

*And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*

THE gospel of Jesus Christ is a blessing, the value of which can never be fully expressed. Blessed, truly blessed, is the people who know the joyful sound! Those who know it best will prize it most;—prize it above gold and silver; yea, above their necessary food. Those also who are appointed to preach it, will rejoice in every opportunity of publishing the glad tidings to their fellow-men. Thus did the first preachers of it; thus did Paul and Silas in the case before us.

In the course of their travels they were peculiarly directed to Macedonia; they were fully assured that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel in that country. They obeyed the heavenly calling, and came to Philippi, the chief city of that district. The text relates the first fruits of their labours there. For some time, indeed, no opportunity seemed to offer itself for the commencement of their work. They were "in that city abiding certain days," praying, no doubt, and patiently waiting, for the leadings of Divine Providence.

At length, on the Sabbath-day, they walked to a place near the city, on the banks of the river Strymon, where the few Jews, or other devout persons, who lived at Philippi, were used to meet for social prayer. They lived among heathens who knew not Jehovah, and who paid no regard to the sabbath; but these persons, who knew and worshipped the true God, used to resort to this retired place, that

they might offer up their joint prayers, and encourage each other to persevere in the religion of their pious ancestors. Probably they were too few, or too poor, to be able to support a synagogue, as in many other places; but what they could they did: and it is highly commendable for all persons, when at a distance from their regular places of worship, to maintain, as well as they can, the worship of their God, and the profession of their religion, even among heathens.

In this place the ministers of Christ found a few pious *women*. We read of no *men* there. Perhaps they were on journeys of business in the country: or their hearts were grown cold about the service of Jehovah, preferring the love of gain to the love of God. However, to these women St. Paul addressed himself, declaring the great truths of the gospel, respecting the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ. Let us, like him, seize every opportunity of diffusing the knowledge of a Saviour. The truth of the gospel is of infinite importance to all mankind. Ministers are to preach it wherever they can. Pious people should converse about it on all convenient occasions, invite their neighbours to hear it, and put religious tracts into their hands. Who can tell how happy the effect of such exertions may prove!

We are not informed *what things* they were which Paul spake to these women; but as it was his determination elsewhere, so no doubt here also, to know nothing among the people but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Indeed, we are told in this chapter (ver. 10.) that it was "the gospel" which he was "*called* to preach" in this country; and no doubt it was the gospel he *did* preach to the women—the good news of salvation by Jesus Christ. And afterwards, (ver. 17.) when St. Paul and his companion were better known in Philippi, this was the report of their character—"These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." This is indeed the first and chief duty of a minister of Christ; and may the ministers of Christ

never forget that it is so! We are also informed (ver. 31, 32.) that they spake to the jailer and his family "the word of the Lord," directing them to believe in Jesus Christ that they might be saved. These are "the things of Christ," "the things of the Spirit," "the things which belong to our peace," the things which the faithful servants of Christ are bound to publish, and which they who are ordained to eternal life are enabled to hear and to believe.

We may observe, that it is very pleasant to speak of spiritual things to devout persons, such as Lydia was. There are people of "the baser sort who speak evil of the things they know not;" and who are so brutish as to refuse a patient hearing to the most interesting truths; but Lydia and her friends were worshippers of God; and, being met together for prayer, they were ready to listen to what the apostle had to offer to their notice. We do not say, with some, that such a disposition "deserves grace:" that is a contradiction in terms, for grace is kindness undeserved. To grace, we must ascribe this very disposition; for, in general, persons turn their backs on all religious instruction; and sometimes manifest the malignity of their hearts by abusing the messengers of God, and the friends of their souls. To the special grace of God it is also ascribed that Lydia did regard and receive the gospel; so that it is not to be referred to her good disposition, naturally; but to the mercy and special influence of heaven; "the Lord opened her heart." It is an excellent thing to have a teachable mind. Whoever possesses it may be thankful, and expect a blessing from all the means of grace. Our Saviour himself says, (John vii. 17.) "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," or not: as if he had said—"Whoever will lay aside his prejudices, and make serious and impartial inquiries into the will of God, by hearing, reading, and meditation, with a sincere desire to learn and practise it, he will be sure to find enough in the gospel to recommend it; and will feel such good effects of it in his own heart, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, as shall oblige

him to conclude, with complete satisfaction, that it is of God and not of men. It is a happy thing when people so read and hear the doctrines of the gospel. They shall have the blessing that Lydia obtained.

In the further consideration of these words we shall observe, that,

1. There is, in general, an awful, a criminal indisposition toward the things of God.

The affairs of this world, its profits and its pleasures, engage the ear and possess the heart. They are pursued with avidity; they are constant subjects of inquiry, of conversation, and delight. But how are the great doctrines, privileges, and duties of the gospel regarded? How are the interesting concerns of the immortal soul, and the eternal world, attended to? The gospel presents to our view things the most wonderful, the most interesting, the most awful, and the most delightful. But how are they received? Just as they were in our Saviour's days. Of this generation we may say, as he did of that, *It is like unto children, sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.* The most charming and affecting subjects of the gospel excite no joy; the most dreadful representations of the word occasion no alarm; mankind are moved by neither; they equally disregard both. Let us inquire a little further into the unhappy causes of this fatal inattention to divine things.

Alas! for some persons, they are altogether become *brutish* in sin; for vice, where it has long reigned, brutalizes the soul and leaves the man scarcely rational. Some are so deplorably immersed in sensuality, that it is almost impossible to gain their attention for a single moment to any thing serious and religious. The mention of any sacred truth excites only the smile of derision, and they treat with contempt the most heavenly and holy matters. It is especially the case with those who have accustomed themselves to foolish talking and jesting; and whose imagination is so defiled and debauched, that the most solemn and sacred things

are turned into folly and laughter. This is a most unhappy state of mind; and which young people should take pains, before it be too late, to avoid. Such persons are indeed "sensual, not having the Spirit," and to them the wisdom of God itself is no better than foolishness.

Prejudice against the truths, the ministers, and the professors of the gospel, is another powerful cause of inattention to it. Prejudice of this kind jaundices the mind, and every doctrine of the word is seen through a false medium. Much of this prejudice may be traced to education, many children being taught to despise and revile every form of religion but that of their parents. Hence arises that dangerous bigotry, which will scarcely deign to allow the hearing of gospel truth, unless it be presented precisely in a certain mode. Hence thousands are kept from ever employing the right of private judgment, or using the scriptures as a touchstone, content to pin their faith on the sleeves of others. Some odious name is frequently attached to the faithful and laborious servants of Christ. The apostles themselves were said to *turn the world upside down*, and their adherents were deemed *a sect, every where spoken against*. The immaculate Jesus himself was called *a deceiver, a Samaritan, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*. Thus among ourselves, one opprobrious name is sufficient to counterbalance, in a prejudiced mind, all the wisdom and piety that can be collected in a sermon, in a book, or in a minister.

Other persons are kept from duly attending to the truth by the love of the world, which prevails in their hearts. Like Pilate, they have no fault to find in the gospel preacher; nay, they will bestow occasional commendation on him, and allow that he is good, and zealous, and useful among the common people: but the world so fills their hearts, that there is not a corner in them left for Christ and his word. Business occupies the greater part of such a person's time; and how are his leisure hours employed? He wants amusement, and must seek it in the tavern, the theatre, or some other haunt

of dissipation. He cannot relish retirement; he knows not what it is to sit down and read his Bible, or spend half an hour in thoughtfulness and self-examination. He can sometimes devote a whole day to a party of pleasure, but cannot spare an hour to hear a sermon. This indisposition towards the word of grace is peculiarly displayed on the Lord's day. He makes his weariness on Saturday night an apology for his sloth on the Sunday morning; and when he rises, it is only to dress for a ride, a walk, or a visit; he indulges his appetite at the table, and renders his mind incapable of serious attention for some hours; and then the evening is spent in sauntering, or in vanity. Thus those precious hours are wasted, which should have been diligently devoted to prayer, reading, and hearing the word of life. Thus he makes light of that heavenly truth, which, through faith, is able to save the soul: and thus, if sovereign grace interpose not, he lives and dies in sin and unbelief.

Let us now proceed to state what that attention is, which the great things of God demand from every rational creature, and such as, we have reason to believe, was paid to the word by Lydia.

(1.) A *candid* attention. The preacher of the gospel should not be prejudged, or condemned unheard. If he be a man of good reputation and character, let him be fairly heard, and let his doctrine be impartially weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. The people of Berea are commended on this account, Acts xvii. 11.—*They were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.* The Bereans were of a more noble, candid, and generous disposition; they heard the apostle candidly, and they searched the scripture from day to day, that they might judge for themselves of the truth of what he delivered; and acting thus, they found such a correspondence between the Christian preacher and the Jewish prophet, that many of them believed.

(2.) A *serious* attention is due to the word, for it

presents to our minds the most serious subjects in the world. Death and judgment, heaven and hell, are serious things, and should be seriously regarded. We should not bring a light and trifling mind to the word of God. Are we not mortals? The word addresses us as such. Are we not sinners? The word is directed to us as such, and seriously sets before us the pardon that guilty criminals need. Are we not spiritually diseased? The gospel proposes a certain remedy. Are we not at variance with God? Reconciliation with him, through Jesus, is set before us. We are the wretched slaves of sin and Satan: the gospel is a proclamation of redemption and liberty. We are miserably poor and needy; but the word of God holds forth to us the true riches. We know we must shortly die and leave this world: the word of life teaches us how to conquer death, and to ensure an inheritance in the skies. Surely these things are so important and interesting, as to demand from us a very serious attention.

(3.) A *devout* attention is requisite. Does God, the great God of heaven, speak to us? Yes, indeed he does. He speaketh from heaven by his word; and this is the only way in which he will speak to us. We are not to desire a messenger from the heavenly world, as the rich man in the parable did. The revelation of the divine will in the scripture is complete; nothing must be added to it, nothing taken from it. *These things are written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name.* What reverence then is due to the word of God! In this manner the Thessalonians heard the gospel from the mouth of the apostle, and he commends them for it, 1 Thess. ii. 13.—*For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.* Observe, these people not only gave it a hearing, but their hearts were opened, like Lydia's, to attend to it, and embrace it with reverence; not as a hu-

man scheme, but as a revelation from God, and on the ground of his authority. Too many persons, in hearing, look no further than to men, and to the words of men; and if they are pleased, it is with the sentiments, the voice, or the manner of the preacher; but we should hear the word of God *as* the word of God, and if we do so it will certainly be with reverence of soul.

(4.) A *diligent* attention is demanded of us. It is not a trifling matter which it represents to us; it is for our life, and therefore should be regarded with the utmost vigour and energy of our souls. O! it is affecting to think what little pains are bestowed on the great concern, compared with what are employed on the ordinary business, or the trifling amusements, of time! How many are there who never took a hundredth part of the pains to secure eternal life, that they have taken to learn the business by which they get their bread: and how many must have been starved to death, had they not been more diligent for their bodies than they have been for their souls! What labour and pains have been employed in learning Latin or French, compared with what have been used in reading the word of God! How many more hours have some young persons spent at a musical instrument, than they ever devoted to the means of grace: yea, in some cases, how much more attention to the card-table, than to the word of life! But the gospel of God demands our most diligent regard. The word of Christ must *dwell in us richly;* we must *meditate upon it day and night;* and *hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against God.* Let it be remembered, that we hear and read for *eternity*; let those words sound in our ears—*for ever! for ever! for ever!* and it will oblige us to give diligent heed to the word of life.

(5.) A *believing* attention is also necessary. The gospel is called *the faith,* and *the word of faith,* because it is proposed to our faith, and received by it. It is the testimony of Jehovah, and demands the fullest credit. The word cannot profit our souls unless it be *mixed with faith;* and then it becomes *the*

*ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls.* It is proposed *for the obedience of faith;* and, when it is obeyed, it becomes the power of God to our salvation. When we understand the gospel aright, and perceive that Jesus is the only, the all-sufficient Redeemer of lost sinners, we are encouraged to trust in him alone; we are constrained to esteem and love him above all; and enabled to comply with his directions, desiring to obey him *in all things whatsoever he hath commanded.*

(6.) A *joyful* attention well becomes those who are favoured with *the joyful sound.* If the gospel be understood, it will appear to be nothing but glad tidings of great joy. It proclaims pardon; free, full, and everlasting pardon for the chief of sinners. And if this be really believed, it must excite joy. It did so in all the first converts to Christianity. When Philip went down to Samaria, *and preached Christ unto them, there was great joy in that city.* When the jailer at Philippi heard the voice of the Lord, *he rejoiced with all his house.* And the Thessalonians *received the word,* though in the midst of severe outward troubles, *with joy in the Holy Ghost;* with such inward consolation, as made rich amends for all their afflictions. Finally,

(7.) A *practical* attention is due to this holy word. And, where it is truly received, it cannot fail of *working by love.* That pretended faith, which is inactive and alone, is dead; it is not *the faith of God's elect.* A true believer is a *doer of the word.* Therefore St. James says, chap. i. 22.—*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls.* He compares a mere hearer to a man observing his face in a glass, who slightly perceives some spots or specks upon it; but it makes no impression on his mind, he soon forgets it, and the spots remain unwashed; on the other hand, the true believer intently looks into the doctrine of the gospel, which is a doctrine of spiritual liberty; he *continues* therein—does not forget it—is not careless and unmindful of what he heard, or of what he saw of himself in that faithful glass; but takes care to live in the exercise of

every grace, and in the practice of every duty—*this man shall be blessed in his deed;—his fruit is unto holiness, and his end shall be everlasting life.* Rom. vi. 22.

It now only remains to observe, that *wherever the word of God is attended to in this manner, it must be ascribed to the grace of God*—"the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things spoken of Paul."

Many women, perhaps, beside Lydia, heard St. Paul's discourse; but we do not read that any beside her was converted at that time. It was grace alone that made her to differ; *The Lord opened her heart.* Her piety before-hand in worshipping the true God is commended; but her hearing the word to profit is ascribed to the power of God. The eyes of her understanding were enlightened by the Spirit; for he alone is *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;* he only can *take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us.* Without this heavenly influence, working in and by the word, such is the blindness of our minds, and the carnal enmity of our hearts, that we should never receive the gospel aright; for St. Paul testifies, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither* can he know them, *because they are spiritually discerned,*—1 Cor. ii. 14. But when the Lord is pleased to exert his gracious influence, it is at once effectual, as it was in the case of Lydia. "When he (says the amiable archbishop Leighton) speaks by his Spirit to a man, selecting and calling him out of the lost world, he can no more disobey than Abraham did, when the Lord spoke to him after an extraordinary manner, to depart from his country and kindred. There is a secret, but very powerful, virtue in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh, but pleasing violence, and cannot choose but follow it; not unlike that of Elijah's mantle upon Elisha, 1 Kings, xix. 19. How easily did the disciples forsake their callings and dwellings to follow Christ!" It was with this sweet

but powerful influence the Lord touched the heart of Lydia. Her heart was opened, never more to be closed against the voice of God's Spirit. It was not a mere temporary affection to the word, a mere religious *fit*, as the apparent zeal of some may be called, but a renovation of heart and nature, whereby she became a new creature, devoted sincerely to Christ. Her sincerity was soon conspicuous, for she was not ashamed or afraid openly to confess Jesus of Nazareth both among Jews and Pagans; but was speedily baptized in his name. Her zeal was manifested by consecrating her whole family (probably children and servants) to the Lord, for they also were baptized. She also displayed her love to Christ by a generous regard to his ministers; for she constrained them to lodge at her house, saying, *If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there.* Thus did the Lord open the heart of Lydia, and thus he opens the hearts of all his people. "The understanding is opened to receive the divine light, the will opened to receive the divine law, and the affections opened to receive the divine love; and when the heart is thus opened to Christ, the ear is opened to his word, the lips are opened in prayer, the hands opened in charity, and the steps enlarged in all manner of gospel obedience."

TO CONCLUDE.—Let us be sincerely thankful for the word. To us, even us, is the word of this salvation sent. He hath shewed his word to Britain, his judgments to England. He hath not dealt so with every nation.—*Praise ye the Lord!* When a scarcity of bread is felt, how severe do we deem the affliction! When plenty is restored, how great do we esteem the benefit! How much greater is the gift of the gospel! Philippi was highly favoured when Paul and Silas paid it a visit. But we are more highly favoured. We have Peter and Paul and the Evangelists. We have Christ himself in his written word, together with the assistance of his ministers, to explain it to us.—*Bless ye the Lord!*

But how much is it to be lamented, that the hu-

man heart is so generally shut against the word of life! Ah! what enemies to their own souls are such persons! *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Well may we adopt the lamentation of Jeremiah, "Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears." The obstinacy of sinners in refusing to hear the voice of Christ is extremely affecting to a pious Christian, to a serious minister. It was so to the compassionate heart of our blessed Redeemer, for when he drew near to the rebellious city of Jerusalem, and foresaw its approaching desolation, *he wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* The season of obtaining eternal life is but a day; if this be lost, the day of vengeance will succeed. Let us dread the thoughts of rejecting the counsel of God against ourselves, and so perishing in unbelief; and let us, who are now favoured with opportunities of reading and hearing the word, make a good use of them, lest they be finished before the benefit designed by them is received.

We have been hearing of the grace of God in opening Lydia's heart. But let us not consider it merely as a history. Let each of us say—Has *my* heart been opened in the same manner? Have I regarded the word of life with a candid, serious, devout, diligent, believing, joyful, and practical attention? If not, surely my negligence of my best interest, and my contempt of the great God who speaketh from heaven, is highly criminal and dangerous. O! thou who hast the key of David, who openest and no man shutteth, exert in me the same efficacious power, and from this moment let my heart be open to thee!

# SERMON LVI.

ROM. viii. 7.

*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*

THAT the whole human race is deplorably depraved, is a general doctrine of the Bible; and that the mind of man, being thus depraved, is in a state of opposition to God, is the particular doctrine of the text. A doctrine, indeed, not very palatable to men in general, but absolutely necessary to be known, if we would avoid the dreadful consequences of that opposition; for, as the apostle asserts in the verse before the text—"to be carnally-minded is death"—everlasting death and destruction: whoever lives and dies under the power of a carnal mind, must eternally perish. Now, our text accounts for this; it shows the justice of this awful sentence, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God;" it stands in direct opposition to him, to his perfections, his government, and his whole will; it is not only an *enemy* to him, but absolutely *enmity* itself; and such is its desperate malignity, its irreconcilable hatred, that it cannot be brought into subjection; the heart itself must be renewed by almighty grace, before it can be reconciled, or brought over to God.

This is a true, but awful, picture of man. How different is it from that picture which man draws of himself! For fallen man is proud, and vain, and

very desirous of justifying himself: he cannot, indeed, say that all is right: he is obliged to own that he sometimes does wrong; but he seems to think it rather accidental than natural. He will allow that he has his frailties and failings, yet maintains that he has a good heart, and sincerely endeavours to do his best. Now it is necessary that these mistakes should be corrected; and that we should trace the streams of vice to their fountain-head, which fountain-head you have in the text, "the carnal mind"—a mind wholly fleshly and worldly, delighting only in earthly things, and therefore averse to God, and entirely destitute of love to him. This is the subject before us; a subject which may be considered as essential to the very basis and ground-work of all true and vital religion. May the Holy Spirit, who alone truly convinceth of sin, and leadeth to repentance, enlighten and impress our hearts, while we show,

I. That the mind of man is indeed *carnal;* and,

II. That, being carnal, it is in *a state of enmity against God.*

I. The mind of man is *carnal*—the mind of *every* man in a state of nature.

By the word *mind*—we are to understand all the powers of the soul; such as the understanding, the will, and the affections; or, as it is expressed by our Reformers in the 9th article of the Church of England, "this infection of nature (called in Greek *phronema sarkos*) which some do expound the *wisdom*, some the *sensuality*, some the *affection*, some the *desire* of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God."

The mind of man is here called *carnal*, that is, *fleshly*, because its desires and delights are fleshly. The apostle, in this chapter, divides all mankind into two classes, ver. 5. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Our

Saviour himself makes the very same distinction, John iii. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The natural man is so entirely a stranger to every thing spiritual, and so completely devoted to the pursuit of worldly and sensual objects, that he is called in scripture *flesh*. Man is indeed composed of two parts, flesh and spirit; because his spirit is dead to God, and as he lives only an animal life, he is very justly called *flesh*. So God said of the whole human race before the flood, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," namely, by the preaching of Noah, "for that he also is *flesh*," that is, entirely corrupt and sensual; and that is the state of every man as born into the world, unless he be born again of the Spirit of God.

The *understanding* of man, however rational, is carnal; for this description belongs not only to the swinish sensualist, who wallows in the filth of the grosser vices; but it is applicable to the most learned and intelligent person in the world, who is destitute of divine teaching. Hence we read, Coloss. ii. 18, of the zealous Jewish teacher, or acute Gentile philosopher, who is "vainly puffed up by his *fleshly mind*;" and, indeed, the human mind is never more carnal, than when swelled with self-conceit and proud reasonings opposed to the word of God.

The mind of man is remarkably carnal in its conceptions of the divine Being, of his worship, and of the way of acceptance with him. Millions of men are, to this day, so grossly carnal, that "they change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Yea, there are millions of men, called Christians, who bow down to a crucifix, to images of the Virgin Mary, and to dead saints, and pray to them for deliverance. Even among ourselves, how many act as if God were a being like to

themselves, and hypocritically worship him with the body only, when their hearts are far from him. All this is carnal.

How carnal are the ideas of many persons respecting the holy law of God, contained in the Ten Commandments! This law is "*spiritual*," and requires the love and obedience of the heart: it forbids and condemns the first motions of sin in the thoughts; but many fancy themselves very good, and fulfillers of the law, because they have not committed the acts of murder, adultery, theft, &c. though they have broken the law in the thoughts and wishes of their hearts, thousands and thousands of times.

The carnal mind mistakes the *gospel* also, as well as the law. The gospel signifies *good news;* good news of the love of God to helpless sinners; good news of the atonement made by the blood of Christ; good news of free pardon, holiness, and eternal life, to be had, gratis, by all who seek them through faith in Christ. But how carnal are the views of many concerning it! Some understand, by the gospel, nothing but the history of Jesus Christ, his birth, miracles, death, &c. Others think the gospel only a set of good precepts, given by Jesus Christ, shewing us how we may make ourselves good, and save ourselves by so doing. Others, even some very learned men, tell us it is a kind of new law, offering us salvation on easier terms than the old law, namely, on the condition of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience. But all this is a false and carnal way of thinking about the gospel; and fully proves the truth of what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ii. 14—"The natural man (that is, the carnal man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are *foolishness* to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is precisely true. Many hear the truths of the gospel plainly preached for seven years together, and never understand one of them. To many others, the great doctrines of grace, faith, righteousness,

holiness, and the influence of the Spirit, seem nothing but nonsense, and they revile them accordingly. And the apostle says it cannot be otherwise, "for they are *spiritually discerned*"—they are perceived in their divine truth and glory, only by an understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God.

The *will* of the natural man is also *carnal.* The will is that power of the mind by which a person chooses any thing. Now the will of fallen man is perverse, obstinate, and rebellious; "it is not subject to the law of God." It does not choose those things which are truly good and excellent, but rejects them with disdain; while it chooses those things which are carnal and hurtful; things forbidden by the word of God, and evidently destructive to the souls of men. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," said Christ to the Jews: "we will not have him to reign over us," say many still.

The *affections* of the soul, such as hope, desire, and love, are also carnal; and this is the principal design of the word *mind* in our text—"they that are after the flesh do *mind* the things of the flesh"—they prefer and pursue carnal and animal gratifications. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" These are the inquiries of carnal persons: not, What shall I do to be saved? not, How shall I please and glorify God? No, the world and the flesh are the idols set up in the heart, and to these they bow down. The service of God has no attractions for them. "What is the Almighty," say they, "that we should serve him, and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" But how eagerly do they pursue worldly pleasures and profits! How violently are many set upon the gratification of their appetites, in drunkenness and lewdness! Such is the strength of their carnal propensities, that they break down all fences, human and divine. Lust must and will be gratified,

in opposition to reason and religion, and at the risk of reputation, health, fortune, and life itself. What will not poor carnal sinners sacrifice for a little brutish short-lived indulgence? How strong is the love of pleasure, amusement, and vain company! How attached are many to show and appearance! while others are more soberly bent upon ruin, by the excessive love of money; determined, at any rate, to be rich: gold is their god; and to this they sacrifice their time, their talents, their strength, yea, their very souls. Thus the world, in some form or other, is the supreme object of a carnal man; he "loves the world, and the things of the world," and consequently, "the love of the Father is not in him." Now this disposition is so exactly the reverse of what it ought to be; it so entirely opposes the holy will of God concerning his creatures, that he accounts it hatred and enmity against himself; and this lead us to the second part of our subject, which was to show,

II. That man, being carnal, is in *a state of enmity* against God. So God accounts it, and "we are sure that his judgment is according to truth." Indeed, this is the very essence of sin, the sinfulness of sin; the transferring that love, which on all accounts is due to the blessed God, as the most amiable of all beings, to his creatures, and to sin; to objects infinitely vile and base in comparison of him. It is turning our backs upon him in contempt and scorn, as if he, whom angels adore, were not worthy of our notice. This conduct must surely be sinful in the highest degree; for "guilt necessarily arises in proportion to the baseness of the offender, and the dignity of the person offended. An insulting behaviour to a servant is a fault, to a magistrate it is a crime; to a king it is treason." What then is it to God—the Benefactor, the Ruler, the Father of men? To forsake him, to take part against holiness and godliness, in which he de-

lights, is to become a rebel and "a hater of God:" this is enmity against God; and this is the temper of all unconverted sinners.

Let us give some instances of this in the dislike which carnal men discover to the *perfections* of God —to the *worship* of God—to the *laws* of God—and to the *people* of God.

The carnal man takes no pleasure in the *perfections* of God: he *thinks* that God is altogether like himself, or rather *wishes* that he were so. That glorious attribute, *holiness*, is peculiarly obnoxious to him; he cannot bear to think that God is so strict and severe as to hate and punish every sin, but would reduce him to his own standard. The *justice* of God he opposes and denies, and will by no means believe that he will eternally punish sin, although he has solemnly declared that he will; consequently the sinner denies the *truth* of God. If Jehovah say, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die," the carnal mind, tutored by Satan, says, "I shall not surely die;" but I shall become wiser and happier by my sins. True holiness consists in the restoration of the divine image in the soul; but the carnal mind turns with disgust from God, and desires not to imitate his perfections.

The carnal mind greatly dislikes the spiritual *worship* of God. That which constitutes the joy of holy angels and redeemed sinners, is an intolerable burden; and therefore wholly omitted, or very carelessly performed. Some scruple not to ridicule the joys of glorified saints, as if it were only "sitting on the bare clouds, and continually singing psalms;" and they will own they can conceive of no heaven superior to the pleasures of the tavern and the brothel. If such persons drag themselves to the church, their wandering eyes, their trifling and irreverent conduct, prove that their hearts are not there: and the man that can easily support the fatigue of a hot and crowded playhouse for four or five hours, is extremely tired with an hour

and a half in the house of God. See him engaged in the amusements of the chase, the card-table, the race-ground, or the play-house, and his eyes sparkle with delight; he anticipates the pleasure before it arrives, and he talks of it with raptures when it is past. But, at church, he is listless and supine; he gapes or sleeps; and no part of the service affords a moment's pleasure, but the words of dismission. Thus he serves his God, in a way that he would be ashamed to serve a fellow worm; and he springs from the church, like a bird from a cage, glad that his confinement is over; and that worldly conversation, his repast, or some other amusement, may now more agreeably occupy his carnal mind.

As to *private* devotion, he knows little or nothing of it. It is, perhaps, wholly omitted for years together; or when conscience or fear make him drop on his knees, the irksome task is soon dispatched. He has no communion with God, nor does he conceive that it would afford him any delight.

Our text instances the enmity of the carnal mind in its opposition to the *law of God*—"it is not subject to the law of God." The law of God is holy, and just, and good; it requires only that we should love him supremely, and our neighbour disinterestedly. God certainly has a right to require this; and it is our most reasonable service: but the carnal mind refuses submission. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" is the language of every sinner, as well as of Pharaoh. "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light;" but, as the prophet says, "they pull away the shoulder—they stop their ears that they should not hear." They consider the law of God as a hard restraint upon their vicious and corrupt inclinations, their worldly interests and sensual pleasures.

Nor is the enmity of the carnal mind against the *gospel* less than that against the law. The gospel is a glorious dispensation of grace and mercy towards

ruined sinners, in which infinite wisdom, justice, holiness, and mercy are sweetly united: a system every way honourable to God and suitable to man, and therefore worthy of all acceptation. But the carnal mind opposes even this. The proud pharisee disdains to submit to the righteousness of Christ; the carnal worldling, intent upon his land, his oxen, and his farm, begs to be excused: the vain philosopher, puffed up with his mental acquirements, cavils at all its humbling doctrines; and thus all agree to reject the counsel of God against themselves.

The carnal mind betrays its inward enmity against God, by a settled contempt and hatred against his *people.* God *has* a people in the world, "called, chosen and faithful;" they are a separate people; and distinguished by their attachment to his word and ways. This very circumstance renders them obnoxious to carnal men; for "they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Now the carnal mind is the very principle of persecution. This has been the source of opposition to the church of God in all ages, from the time of righteous Abel to the present moment; but we are not to be offended at this. Our Lord has said, "Marvel not that the world hate you; it hated me before it hated you." Let this reconcile the people of God to the Cross.

Thus have we briefly described the carnal mind, and shewn its enmity against God. But what words can paint its criminality and vileness? What can be said of it, equal in force, to what the apostle says in the text—"it is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be;*" it *cannot* be subject; it is not the nature of the carnal mind to submit to God; it is as contrary to it as light is to darkness. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Nothing can remove it but the divine power of renewing grace, bestowing a spiritual mind upon us.

## ADDRESS.

My friends! If the mind of man be thus carnal, and the carnal mind be thus hostile to God, it is a matter of the most serious consideration, whether we are now under the power of it, or happily delivered by grace. Such as the *mind* is, such will the walk and conversation be. Review the particulars before mentioned, and strictly enquire how it is with you. The decision is of the utmost consequence, for "they who are in the flesh cannot please God," ver. 8; but, on the contrary, are under his dreadful displeasure, and liable to his eternal wrath; for "if we live after the flesh we shall die."

What need then of humiliation! How ill does it become a fallen creature, with a heart so carnal, to boast of its excellence; and call that a *good heart*, which the scripture pronounces to be carnal, and enmity against God. Surely, instead of boasting, the deepest sorrow and shame become us. We should abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes; for what can be so vile and abominable as this carnal disposition! This is the true source of all our sinful actions; for the carnal walk is produced by the carnal mind: and even they who may not be chargeable with gross immoralities, may have reason to charge themselves with this horrid temper; and if any are disposed to deny that they are carnally minded, the denial itself proves beyond a doubt that they are altogether carnal. For even the best of men, the most wise, holy, and pious, are conscious of the remains of this wretched temper. "This infection of nature (say our Reformers) doth remain even in them that are regenerate;" and St. Paul affirms, that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." Yea, he says of himself, in a comparative view, "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal." Rom. vii. 14. "Go," saith a modern writer, "go with the serious Chris-

tian into his closet, ask him *his* opinion of the corruption of the heart, and he will tell you that he is deeply sensible of its power; for he has learned it from much self-observation, and long acquaintance with the workings of his own mind. He will tell you that every day strengthens this conviction; yea, that hourly he sees fresh reason to deplore his want of simplicity in intention, his infirmity of purpose, his low views, his selfish unworthy desires, his backwardness to set about his duty, his languor and coldness in performing it; that he finds himself obliged continually to confess, that he feels within him two opposite principles, and that 'he cannot do the things that he would.'"

This true humiliation of spirit will render the blessings of the gospel very precious. The consciousness of so much evil, not only in the life but in the heart, will oblige us to seek for pardoning mercy, through faith in the Redeemer: and that blood will appear to us invaluably precious, which can, and does, cleanse us from much sin. The love of God will appear, as it is, inexpressibly wonderful, when fixed upon creatures so destitute of every thing meritorious; and the grateful language of the saved sinner will be, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits!" Are we conscious that "whereas we were once blind now we see?" that we can sincerely delight in the perfections of God, in the worship of God, in the law of God, and in the people of God? O let the pleasing change be reviewed with thankfulness, and the glory ascribed, where alone it is due, to the God of all grace; and be it our daily concern to "walk in the Spirit," and to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit, in all righteousness and goodness."

There is one other truth fairly deducible from what has been said of the carnal mind, and that is—*the necessity of Regeneration*, or the new birth. For this we have the highest authority. Our Saviour saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except

a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:" and when this doctrine was objected to by the carnal mind of Nicodemus (and carnal minds always object to it) our Lord confirmed the truth of it, by assigning this reason for its necessity —"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" which shews (as Mr. Burkitt observes) "that as original corruption is conveyed by natural generation, so saving regeneration is the effect and product of the Holy Spirit's operation."—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin," saith the prophet, "or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Here the difficulty mentioned is only that of breaking off a habit or custom, which is reckoned *a second nature;* but how much greater must be the difficulty of altering a nature itself; a carnal nature, a carnal mind, the nature of which is enmity against God! Surely the power of Almighty God is necessary here; even that same power which said, "Let there be light, and there was light." O that this new-creating power may be graciously displayed in changing the carnal into the spiritual mind: "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

# SERMON LVII.

LUKE x. 41, 42.

*And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

OUR adorable Saviour, whose gracious employment it was to go about doing good, was pleased in one of his journeys to call at a friend's house in Bethany, a little village about two miles from Jerusalem. There dwelt, in one happy house, Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary; all pious persons, and humble disciples of the blessed Jesus. Martha was probably the house-keeper, for it is said, ver. 38, that "she received him into her house." He, who was the Maker of all, and the Lord of all, was for our sakes so poor that he had not a place where to lay his head, no house of his own; but, here and there, a pious person was found, who thought it the highest honour to entertain him. In a spiritual sense, Jesus still stands at the door of our house, of our hearts, and knocks for admittance. O that we may open our hearts, and most cordially receive the heavenly guest!

No sooner was he seated, than he began to instruct the family in divine things: thus should we thankfully embrace every fit opportunity of discoursing on subjects which belong to our peace. Let religion have a place in the parlour as well as in the church.

When this heavenly teacher opened his mouth, the domestic circle was all attention; so much is signified by the expression "Mary *sat at Jesus' feet*, and heard his word." A humble heart and a humble

posture well become the disciples of Christ, when they hear his word. When Christ began his discourse, Martha as well as Mary was diligently attentive; for it is said—"she had a sister, who *also* sat at his feet." But, as some attention from the mistress of the house was necessary, to procure refreshment for the numerous guests (for there must have been thirteen in number, if all the apostles were there), Martha, who appears to have been of an active turn, left the room to superintend the business of the house. She denied herself the pleasure of continuing to regard his charming discourse, for the purpose of making an abundant preparation for our Lord and his friends; a preparation, it should seem, far greater than was necessary. Finding this care and labour too much for her strength and spirits, she returns to the room to complain of her sister. She came to Jesus, and said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?—bid her therefore that she help me."

While we must commend the hospitality and generosity of Martha, in wishing to entertain her guests in a liberal manner, we cannot but observe something blameable in this application to our Lord. She had certainly lost her temper, and was improperly angry with her sister. She should have made some allowance for the pious zeal of Mary, who was too deeply engaged in listening to Jesus to recollect the affairs of the house. If her help was necessary, Martha might have beckoned her out, or whispered the request in her ear. But it was still more blameable to insinuate a degree of censure on our Lord himself, as if he was to blame for detaining her. "Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" This was very indecent and disrespectful. If she thought it wrong that her younger sister should indulge her ease, while she was so hard at work, yet why was the Lord to be censured, as if he were the cause of it? But while we notice this infirmity of Martha, let us take care to correct the

same fault in ourselves. We are too apt to lose our composure in a hurry of worldly business; too apt to find fault with our fellow-Christians when they do not come up to our standard; and, what is much worse, to murmur at cross providences, and quarrel with heaven itself; for this is sometimes the language of our dissatisfaction—"Lord, dost thou not care that I am so ill, so perplexed, so persecuted, so deserted, so helpless? O let us beware of this temper, and we shall be angry with ourselves rather than with Martha.

As this question was proposed to our Lord himself, he is pleased to answer it. Mary, who was blamed, remains silent; she leaves her defence to an abler advocate. Jesus kindly passes over the censure which was aimed at himself; but fully vindicates Mary's conduct, while he tenderly reproves Martha for her extreme anxiety.

Our Lord well knew the state of her mind—"she was *cumbered* about *much serving*"—anxious to make a great entertainment, and to have every thing in exact order; she was *cumbered* about this; almost *distracted* with the hurry and bustle it occasioned in the family. This was, no doubt, occasioned by her respect to her much-esteemed visitor; yet probably there was a little mixture of pride in the business; a wish to set off the whole to the best advantage, as is too common, even with good people, on such occasions, whereby the spiritual comfort, both of the hostess and the guests, is often diminished. Jesus therefore gave her a gentle rebuke. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." He was no doubt pleased with her good intention to entertain him; but he was not pleased at her making a great feast, as if he took delight in a sumptuous table. He did not covet delicacies; nor is he pleased with the luxury of his professing people; nor with the great expence and great trouble which a splendid entertainment requires. He would have been

more satisfied with seeing Martha sitting with Mary to hear his instructions—"*he was better pleased to see Mary in the chapel than Martha in the kitchen.*"

That which most displeased him was, that her attention to *many things* obliged her, for the present, to neglect the *one thing*,—that which was the great thing he came to her house for, namely, to teach and instruct the family; and this was the *one thing* to which Mary wisely confined her attention. When, therefore, he blames Martha for too much regarding many *worldly* things, he commends Mary for regarding that one *spiritual* thing, the care of her soul, by improving the present opportunity of enjoying his instruction. "One thing," said he, "is *needful*"—is absolutely necessary, indispensably necessary; and consequently all other things must give place to it. He therefore adds—"and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her:" as if he had said, Your dear sister has such a just and affecting sense of the infinite value of her immortal soul, and so earnest a desire of improving the present opportunity of becoming wise to salvation, that she has judiciously given the preference to my company; and in doing this she has chosen the good portion, and secured a blessing that she shall never forfeit.

Thus Martha was reproved, and Mary commended. It must have been a great disappointment to the former; she expected a different kind of answer: but Christ is faithful; and "whom he loveth he chasteneth." It was because he loved her that he rebuked her; and, as she was truly a pious woman, no doubt she profited by the reproof, and loved him for it more than ever.

There is much solid instruction to be derived from this little history. The blameable anxiety of Martha, and the pious devotion of Mary, gave occasion for our Lord's delivering one of the most weighty sayings that words can possibly express; a saying worthy to be written in letters of gold; a say-

ing worthy to be affixed in every church, in every house, in every heart. May the finger of God inscribe it on our inmost souls!

*One thing is needful!*

For our further instruction from this pleasing and most interesting passage, it may be proper to observe the three following truths:

1. The care of the soul is the one thing needful.
2. The cares of the world greatly obstruct this religious care.
3. Truly religious persons possess a portion which they shall never lose.

We are first to observe that *the care of the soul* is the one thing needful. It is the religious care of the soul that our Lord here intends, as appears from his opposing Mary's care to Martha's cares; she cared for *many* things; Mary for *one;* and she manifested this care by a studious attention to every word that dropped from his lips. But this short sentence comprehends a great deal.

The care of the soul implies a consideration of its infinite value and importance, as *immortal.* According to our Saviour's words in another place, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The care of the soul includes the diligent use of all those means which God has appointed for its salvation; the first of which is a due regard to the word of God. Thus Mary proved her care; and thus must we. It is true we have not now the bodily presence of this great Teacher, yet we have his word; we have that gospel which he ordered to be preached to all nations, and which he promised to sanction with his spiritual presence to the end of the world. This gospel is able to make us "wise to salvation;" and it is his "power to salvation." Those, therefore, are most like Mary, who pay the most diligent regard to his word both in public and private.

Prayer also is a necessary branch of this religious care. That person cannot have much concern for his soul who neglects this duty; but he who knows and feels that he is a miserable sinner, will most gladly apply to the throne of grace for mercy. This will be the daily business of every one who has a due concern for his soul. "Behold he prayeth!"

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is also the proper effect of this care. The word of God every where directs the sinner to Jesus as the only deliverer from the wrath to come; so when the jailer evinced a concern for his soul by crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" the Apostle immediately replied—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is indeed the one thing needful. All our religious cares meet in this point; for there is no name under heaven whereby we must be saved, but the precious name of Jesus; the soul therefore that is taught of God, rests in nothing short of this; as it is written, "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" and blessed be his name, it is added, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The person that is duly concerned for his soul wants those blessings which are only to be found in Jesus; and here they are all ready for him. Jesus is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption; every thing needful to make a poor sinner rich, and a miserable sinner happy. Yes; Jesus Christ is all and in all.

The care of the soul will influence the whole conduct of a believer; he cannot live at large as other men do. The fear of the Lord is in his soul. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart. The commandments of God are written upon his mind. Sin therefore becomes his aversion, holiness his delight, religion his element, the people of God his companions, and heaven the prize at which he aims.

Take these thoughts and put them together; you will then surely admit that this religious concern is the one thing needful. It must be so, if the soul

itself be of any value; if it be immortal; if it must exist for ever, either in bliss or woe. Is there a state of everlasting misery for impenitent sinners? The God of truth declares there is. He who spake the words of our text to Martha speaks also of the day of judgment, when he will say to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now, if we believe this, we shall flee from the wrath to come; it will be the first concern of our souls to avoid eternal torments. What can be so dreadful as hell? What can be so necessary as to escape it?

Is there, on the other hand, a state of complete and everlasting happiness in heaven? Will Christ say to his people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" And is it certain that the true Christian shall enjoy the presence and glory of the Redeemer to all eternity? Surely then, that religious care which he has made necessary to the attainment of this happiness, must be the one thing needful. What if Martha's cares could procure mines of silver, crowns of gold, sceptres, jewels, and kingdoms, in all their rich abundance; what are these compared to the glorious blessedness of saved sinners, connected with Mary's solicitude for the one thing needful?

But, besides these important concerns of futurity, religion is the one thing needful, even *now*. Godliness hath the promise of the present life, as well as of that to come. How many snares are avoided! how many mischiefs are prevented! how much solid peace of mind procured by the truly religious person! What happy individuals, what happy families, happy towns, and happy kingdoms would there be if the blessed religion of the Gospel prevailed in all its beauty and power! This then is the great concern, this the first business, the chief end of man. Compared with this, the most important affairs of the greatest empires are trifles light as air.

"Vanity of vanities," said the royal preacher, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" but he adds, as the conclusion of all his studies, pursuits, and discoveries—"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;" or as it is expressed in a similar passage, and with the like solemnity—"Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

If, then, we give credit to the testimony of wise and good men; to the testimony of God throughout the scriptures; or to the testimony of our divine Saviour in the text, we are obliged to assent to this important maxim—The care of the soul is the one thing needful. And if it be so, we must stop and enquire how it comes to pass that so few persons make it any part of their care; very few indeed their first and principal care? How can we account for this? Probably it is not because they are not convinced of the truth; for there are serious moments in which the most careless sinners admit it: but it is to be accounted for in the prevalence of worldly cares, which, for want of faith in the reality of eternal things, press upon them so closely, that like Martha, they are careful, and cumbered, and troubled, to the great neglect of the chief concern. And this leads us, in the second place, to observe, that,

2. The cares of the world greatly obstruct this religious care. The case of Martha is a proof of this. She was blameable; yet not half so blameable as many are; for her cares were all directed to the accommodation of the Lord Jesus and his friends; but our cares have commonly our own interest and comfort only in view.

It may be said here, "Are not worldly cares necessary? Must we shut up ourselves in a cell, and do nothing but say our prayers?" We readily admit that worldly cares, in their proper place and proportion, are unavoidable, are absolutely necessary. We have bodies as well as souls: these must be pro-

vided for; and to make this provison, care and labour are necessary. Religion was never designed to make us idle; and St. Paul directs, that if any man will not work he shall not eat. Every person, therefore, in his own station, has his own proper cares; the servant, the master, the tradesman, the housekeeper, the magistrate; and, the same apostle says,—"If any one provide not for his own, (his own relations) and especially for those of his own house, (his family) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. v. 8. It is not therefore against the necessary cares attached to our several stations in life that we speak, but against the *excessive degree* of them—against that degree of them which hinders and obstructs the superior care of the soul. And here lies the danger of the more moral and virtuous part of mankind; for we do not now speak of persons who live in known and wilful sins, such as drunkenness, lewdness, profaneness, or any other gross vice; these abominations most evidently war against the soul, and must end in its everlasting ruin. Our business now is with the sober and decent members of society, who may be just, and honest, and useful in their places, and whose diligence and industry recommend them to their fellow creatures. We are willing to give due honour to such characters; but must be permitted to urge upon them, in the most serious and solemn manner, the great danger of everlasting ruin and perdition by the love of the world;—a thing not less ruinous and destructive to the souls of men, than the most flagrant and disgraceful vices.

For this alarming assertion we have no less authority than that of St John — "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. Let it also be remembered what it was that excluded the numerous persons invited to the gospel feast, Luke xiv. 16; it was the love of the world, it was the undue love of lawful things—

"they all began to make excuse," and all their excuses were, their care and trouble about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful. But the master of the feast protested—"None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." In like manner a very promising young gentleman, who addressed our Lord with great respect, and proposed to become one of his disciples, was for ever separated from him by the love of the world; he left him very sorrowful, for he was very rich. But we must proceed, in the last place, to shew that,

3. Truly religious persons possess a portion which they shall never lose. "*Mary*," said our Lord, "*hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her.*" The part which she chose was to sit at the feet of Jesus, and receive in faith his divine instructions. This was a good part, the advantage of which she never lost. The reputation which Martha acquired as a generous hostess was soon gone: but Mary's honour continues to this moment.

In like manner, a truly religious person, one who is renewed by the Spirit of God, is a humble learner at the feet of Christ, who still teaches his church by his word and Spirit; one who accepts the Lord's gracious invitation, "Learn of me"—be my scholar, be my disciple; become wise to salvation by my sacred gospel: for "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The Gospel presents to the unenlightened mind a part or portion, which the soul deliberately chooses in preference to the whole world. An interest in Christ and union to him enriches the soul with all the infinite blessings of grace and glory. The complete pardon of sin—the perfect justification and acceptance of his person—the unspeakable felicity of peace with God—the most cordial reception into his dear family—the most friendly intercourse and communion with him—the consolations of his Holy Spirit—and certain protection from final apostacy—are among the invaluable privileges of a believer in the

present world, and surely they deserve the title of the "good part;" but, even these, good and great as they are, are comparatively small, when we take a glance, by faith, into the unseen and eternal world. Who can tell what is reserved in heaven, as yet unrevealed, for the heirs of glory? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Those who have now a part with Christ in his grace shall have a part with Christ in his glory: those who are partakers with Christ in his sufferings, shall be partakers with him in his joys and honours to all eternity.

This then is "the good part," intrinsically good; pre-eminently good; and what renders it incomparably good is, its duration; it shall not be taken away; it is an everlasting possession. This is more than we can say of any earthly property: whatever good it may be, it partakes of that vanity and uncertainty which are inseparable from the present state of things. Pleasures perish in the using. Honour is a momentary bubble. "Riches make to themselves wings and fly away." Life itself is a transient vapour. What then is durable? Nothing, nothing, but this good part. This shall abide; when the earth itself shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat, it "shall not be taken away." God, who bestowed it, will not take it away, for his gifts and callings are without repentance: wicked men, though they should be permitted to persecute, cannot take it away. Satan, with all his wiles and devices, cannot, shall not, take it away. No; we are "persuade,d that neither death nor life, nor angels nor devils, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To Conclude.—In this discourse religion is brought to a point. Here is nothing to distract your attention. Here is a weighty sentence, uttered by the lips of eternal wisdom—*One thing is needful*

—*one* thing, observe; and that thing is *religion*, or the care of the soul.

So *Jesus Christ* says. What do *you* say? Are you of his mind? Do you coincide with him, or totally differ? Say now, honestly, Is religion the one thing needful with you? Is it so in your settled judgment? Is it so in your daily practice? Or, is it quite the reverse? Not the *one* thing? Not *any* thing? Not at all the object of serious attention, of desire, of delight? How *many* things engage your thoughts, and divide your affections! But you cannot say, they shall not be taken away from you. Even now they cannot satisfy you. What will they do for you in the hour of death? You know they must fail you then, if not before. O be wise! Be wise *now*. Defer not a concern so great, so vast, so important. Your eternal happiness perhaps depends on the decision which your mind shall form this moment. God help you to choose aright!

What a shield does this text afford us, against all the arrows of censure and ridicule that a vain and thoughtless world may hurl against us! Let them call our serious regard to religion fanaticism; let them treat us as enthusiasts or madmen. It is of no consequence at all. We know that *we* are right and *they* are wrong. We will never blush at the charge of being religious, while the glorious Teacher and Judge of the world is on our side, and says—"One thing is needful."

Have we chosen the good part? Who hath made us to differ from those who reject it? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. To sovereign, distinguishing, almighty Grace, be all the glory and all the praise! We give *him* the glory; he permits *us* to take the joy. And have I indeed chosen the good part? and shall it never be taken away? Is all safe for eternity? Is Jesus mine, and heaven mine? O Christian happy art thou! Envy not the gayest and the richest of the world; be content with thy better portion; rejoice; be thankful; and live to God.

# SERMON LVIII.

EZEKIEL XVIII. 30.

*So Iniquity shall not be your Ruïn.*

IF we believe the scriptures to be the word of God, we are bound to take our estimate of every religious subject from them; and, in doing so, we shall find a wonderful difference between the doctrines of God and the opinions of men. This difference will appear in a most striking manner on the subject of *Sin:* the representations which are made of it in the Bible are totally different from those which are made of it by sinners themselves. It is common for the latter to think and speak of sin as a light and trifling affair; it gives them no concern; it excites no alarm; they seek no remedy; but can make plausible excuses for it, turn it into a jest, and even glory in their shame. But if we consult the word of God, we shall find that sin is the worst of all evils; that it is extremely hateful to our Maker; extremely prejudicial to ourselves; that it is the dreadful source of all the miseries we feel, and the procuring cause of sufferings unspeakable and eternal in the world to come. Look at sin in the flattering mirror that Satan and the world present to us, and it assumes the appearance of bewitching pleasure, freedom, and advantage; but survey it in the faithful glass of the divine truth, and you behold an object deformed and loathsome; vile and base in itself, and full of unspeakable danger and mischief to the sinner. The text describes its tendency in one comprehensive word — RUIN — a

word of tremendous import, even when applied to worldly concerns; it is to subvert, demolish, impoverish, and utterly destroy. Applied to the soul, it is to *demolish* the image of God; it is to become miserably poor; it is to destroy all true happiness; and to ensure a long eternity of inconceivable sorrows and sufferings.

But the text also opens to us a door of hope; while it points out the ruinous effects of sin, it offers the most gracious advice in order to our avoiding it; and this is the principal design of the gospel; it is a good message, informing us how we may be delivered from eternal misery, and made partakers of everlasting life. There are two things, therefore, which now call for our serious attention.

1. Sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men; and,
2. The gospel directs us how to avoid the impending ruin.

We are first to prove that *Sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men.* "The wages of sin is death."—"When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." By sin we mean any want of conformity to the law of God, or any transgression of it; not coming up to what it requires, or doing any thing that it forbids. God has an undoubted right to our obedience; he made us; he gives us all the powers we possess; he preserves us and provides for us, and bestows innumerable comforts upon us. How reasonable then is it that we should obey his will, abstain from what would hurt us, and do the things which are pleasing and acceptable in his sight! But such is the perverseness of our hearts, that we refuse to do this. We set up our own carnal will as our law; and practically say, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us." "Who is the Lord that we should obey him?"

This is the daring language, this is the provoking practice of men in general. But is it not awfully criminal? Can we reasonably suppose that a God of unspotted holiness will endure such conduct? Would the rulers of this world permit their subjects to disobey their laws with impunity? No: every human law has its proper *sanction*, or it would be merely a piece of advice, and not a law; and if the law be broken, punishment follows of course.

Even in private life, those very persons who flatter themselves that God will not punish their sins are frequently disposed severely to resent the little injuries done to themselves. The parent thinks it right to keep his child in subjection, and sometimes chastise him for a fault. He is extremely angry with a negligent servant, and perhaps dismisses him for a single fault. If he be defrauded by a neighbour, he will withdraw his favours from him; and perhaps prosecute a thief, even unto death, for the loss of a few shillings. A gentleman who piques himself upon his nice sense of honour, will kill his friend in a duel to obtain satisfaction: and yet, O strange inconsistency! these very persons will deny that the God of infinite justice means to take any notice of the numberless offences they have committed against him for many years together.

In human governments, when there is a conspiracy against the king or the state, the culprits are diligently sought for, and when convicted, are punished with exemplary severity; but is rebellion against heaven the only innocent rebellion? It is a crime of the greatest magnitude to aim at dethroning an earthly monarch, and is it no harm to live a life of open rebellion against God; violating his laws, opposing his authority, submitting to another prince, and as far as the sinner can, aiming to dethrone the eternal Majesty?

The rebellion of a child against a parent is still more vile, as in the case of Absalom, who would

have dethroned and murdered his indulgent father David. But this is a crime justly chargeable upon every sinner. Hearken to the indictment, in the words of God himself. "Hear, O heavens, and give hear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" This crime, I say, is justly chargeable on each of us; we have united the ingratitude of an undutiful child with the rebellion of a wicked subject; we have despised the laws of God; we have denied that God requires any submission; we have obeyed another prince, an usurper, even "the prince of the power of the air, which now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience."

And shall we yet say, What harm have we done? We have insulted the God of heaven: we have abused his justice, as if he would not punish sin; we have abused his power, as if he could not punish it; we have abused his omniscience, as if he did not see our sin; we have abused his truth, as if he would belie himself; and we have abused his patience, which has borne so long with us: and shall we abuse him still further, by saying that all his threatenings mean nothing at all?

Hear some of them. — "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*" Ezek. xviii. 4 "*The wicked shall be turned into hell.*"—Psalm ix. 17. "*Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*"—James i. 15. "*Fear him, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell;*" —"*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*"—Matt. x. 28. "*Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.*— Heb. ii. 2. "*He will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.*"—Rom. ii. 8, 9. Now, are all these dreadful threatenings nothing? Do they not prove that sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men?

But as *general threatenings* do not affect so much as those which are denounced against *particular*

*sins*, observe the following. What saith a holy God against the unclean sinner? — "*Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;*"—Heb. xiii. 4. and again "*Whoso committeth adultery destroyeth his own soul.*"—Prov. vi. 32. What saith God to the drunkard? "*Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? They that tarry long at the wine, &c.—at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*" — Prov. xxiii. 32. What saith he to the swearer? "*God will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.*"—Exod. xx. 7. The like may be said of every one who lives in any other known sin; they are ruining themselves — they are *heaping up wrath against the day of wrath*: like a man building a pile on which to burn himself to death; every time a man commits a new sin, he is bringing another faggot to enlarge the heap and increase the flame.

Sin has already ruined its thousands and its millions. When sin got into heaven, it ruined multitudes of the angels, and pulled them down from their thrones into endless perdition. Sin ruined our first parents, and dragged them out of paradise into a wilderness of woe. Sin ruined the world of the ungodly, and brought a destructive deluge of wrath upon them all. Sin ruined Sodom and Gomorrah, and brought down showers of fire and brimstone upon them. Sin ruined the nation of Israel, by bringing Philistines and Assyrians upon them; and when they filled up the measure of their iniquity by the murder of the Son of God, completely ruined them, both in church and state, and dispersed them among all nations, a standing monument of the ruinous nature of sin!

And, O! could we draw aside the veil which conceals from our view the dire abode of damned spirits, where God's mercies are clean gone, and he will be favourable no more, what a terrific proof should we have of the truth of our text! One and all would say, "We are filled with the fruit

of our own ways; we are reaping the wages of our own sins; O mortals! believe it, sin is indeed a ruinous thing!"

Yes! while we are sitting here at our ease, and calmly contemplating the evil of sin, they are shrieking aloud with insufferable torture; living, ever-living witnesses of its awful evil. Methinks I hear one of them say, "Ah, indeed; sin has proved my ruin. Sabbath-breaking ruined me. I indulged my sloth. I kept open my shop for the paltry gain of a few shillings—I would have my pleasant walks, and rides, and company—I deserted the house of God, neglected the salvation of my soul; and now I am ruined for ever!"

Another cries, "Sensuality has destroyed me. My heart was full of uncleanness. I doted on the embraces of an harlot. I sacrificed, for the delights of a moment, the pleasures of an eternal world; and find, by woeful experience, that 'her house is the way to death, her steps take hold on hell'."

Methinks the doleful lamentation of a third is to this effect: "I was a lover of that wretched world. Gold was my God. I would be rich at all events. I would have customers, and friends, and business at any rate: I succeeded. I got a good trade, but I lost a good God. I got friends, but made Christ my enemy. I obtained money, but ruined my soul!" O sirs! there is not a miserable man or woman in hell who does not say—"Sin has been my ruin!"

Well then: will you take warning by their ruin, so as to avoid the same? Has not sin ruined souls enough already? Must *you*, who know all this, be added to the dreadful number? God forbid! O that there were a heart in you to say—"I see, I plainly see, that sin is a ruinous thing. It is of God's infinite mercy that it has not destroyed me long ago; and now I desire to forsake it: I desire to fly from the wrath to come: but whither must I fly? What must I do to escape this threatening ruin?"

To answer this important inquiry shall be our

next business; for we proposed to show, in the second place, that,

2. The gospel directs us how to avoid the impending ruin.

I say—the *gospel* directs how to avoid it; and nothing but the gospel *can* do this. The light of nature could never have informed us upon what terms an offended God would be merciful, or whether he would be merciful at all. The law of God can do us good only by convincing and alarming our consciences, and exciting in us an earnest desire to flee from approaching wrath. But in this most interesting concern the gospel of Christ offers us the fullest satisfaction; and tells us in three words what must be done that iniquity may not prove our ruin. We must "*believe*"—we must "*repent*"—we must "*lead a new life.*"

(1.) We shall begin with "*faith;*" faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. It was thus that St. Paul began with the trembling jailer at Philippi: when, apprehensive of immediate ruin, he cried aloud, in the consternation of his soul—"What must I do to be saved?" The servant of God directed his views to the only refuge for a sinner, even to Jesus, that benevolent friend of sinners, who came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

It was to prevent our everlasting ruin that God sent his Son into the world: it was, "that they who believe in him should not *perish,*" as they must have done without him, "but have everlasting life." Turn your eyes then to Jesus! see him descending from the bright abode of glory; making himself of no reputation; taking upon himself the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of men: see him humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Think of the poverty, the pain, the sorrow, the contempt, he bore on earth. Behold him in the garden of Gethsemane, lying on the cold ground; pouring out strong cries,

and tears; and in the inconceivable agony of his oppressed soul, sweating great drops of blood! Follow the patient sufferer to the unjust tribunals of Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate; falsely accused by his malicious enemies, abandoned by his dearest friends, and sentenced to an ignominious punishment. "Behold the man!" crowned with piercing thorns, and torn with cruel scourges. See him bearing the heavy cross along the dolorous way, to the place of common execution. See him stripped in the sight of a barbarous multitude; stretched as on a rack; affixed to the cross with spikes; and lifted up, a piteous spectacle, the object of public scorn and derision! Observe the ghastly paleness of death overspreading his sacred face. He dies! the friend of sinners dies! But not till he cried aloud—"It is finished!" Yes; he "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness."

You then, who desire that sin may not be your ruin, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Believe that "he is able to save to the uttermost," able to save *you!* "His blood cleanseth from all sin;" and saves from ruin every helpless creature that comes to him for life. Come to him then as your Saviour. Cast your soul upon him, "so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

(2.) *Repentance* is, throughout the Scriptures, always represented as necessary to salvation; not indeed, as the meritorious cause of pardon; but as that disposition of mind which becomes a guilty sinner; which gives glory to God, and renders the deliverance from sin unspeakably suitable and precious. Indeed, "Repentance is a tear dropped from the eye of faith." And who can behold the Saviour bleeding and dying for him, without confessing, lamenting, and forsaking, the sins which occasioned his death! Repentance is that reasonable service to which the Lord is in our text exhorting the children of Israel: *Repent, and turn*

*yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.*" Our Saviour himself insisted upon repentance, saying, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and all the apostles went out and preached that men should repent.

There is so much pride and ignorance in the hearts of sinners, that, without the special grace of God, they are strongly inclined to conceal or excuse their sins. Some entirely deny them, and say "they have done no harm;" others justify themselves by putting their good deeds in the opposite scale; others invent excuses for their sins; and, instead of blaming themselves as they ought to do, lay the fault on their situations, connexions, and temptations: the greater part add to their sins by attempting to lessen them; and gloss over the vilest iniquities by soft and favourable names; as being "a little free," "a little gay," "a little wild," &c.; and boasting, notwithstanding all their vices, that they mean well and have a good heart. But the penitent soul, who dreads the deserved ruin, will "not dissemble nor cloak them before the face of Almighty God; but confess them with an humble, penitent, and obedient heart:" he will be far, very far, from boasting of his integrity, his good heart, or his good works: he will discover godly sorrow, grief, and shame; and will abhor himself, as the vilest of the vile, repenting in dust and ashes. To such a person will the God of mercy look with a compassionate eye, for he is nigh to them that are of a "broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Yes; we are authorized to say to the humble penitent—"Iniquity shall not be thy ruin."

(3.) It is necessary that the believing and penitent sinner, who sincerely desires to escape from the wrath to come, should *lead a new life.* The verse after our text gives this direction—"*Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*" These

expressions do not suppose an inherent power in the sinner to effect this; for it is certain that "without Christ we can do nothing:" and we find that what is here directed to be done, as a matter of *duty*, is elsewhere proposed in a way of *promise*, chap. xi. 19. but, by the grace of God accompanying his words, they become effectual to the sinner's conversion; and, as Austin well explains the precept, "God doth not command impossibilities; but by commanding, he admonishes us to do what *is* in our power, and to pray for that which *is not*."

We can have no sufficient evidence that sin will not be our ruin, until sin becomes our burden; until it be the object of our sincere aversion; until we renounce the sinful delights of the world, and choose the things we once abhorred. The very disposition of the heart must be altered; turned from sin to holiness, from vanity to godliness, from the creature to the Creator, from earth to heaven. O! what a great and glorious change is this, and the very seal of God to this animating message—"So iniquity shall not be your ruin!"

Thus, Men and Brethren, we have endeavoured to prove the truth of the title which we prefixed to this discourse—RELIGION *or* RUIN; and have we not made it out? Is it not sufficiently plain from the word of truth, that there are but two things to choose—Serious Religion, or everlasting Ruin? There are but two different roads—the broad one that leads to destruction, or the narrow one that leads to life; and in the one or the other of these each of us is now travelling.

And does the person who reads or hears this discourse believe it is so? What then is *thy* choice, my fellow sinner? Religion or ruin?—Sin and death, or grace and life? Both are now set before you. Which do you prefer? O! dismiss not the subject till you make a decision. Perhaps it may never be put to you in the same manner any more.

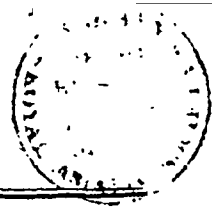
And O! how much depends on the choice! May Almighty God help you to make it and keep to it. "So iniquity shall not be your ruin."

I would most gladly impress on your mind this solemn truth—*Sin is a ruinous thing.* It ruins men, because they do not believe it is ruinous. It may be, you have never yet seen it in this light. You say—"Sin is so pleasant; how can it be ruinous?" I admit that sin is pleasant. There certainly are pleasures in sin; but there are pains too. And a life of sin is not half so pleasant as a life of religion. Ask those who have tried both. How often, even in the present world, does sin procure ruin. How many a promising youth has it ruined:—ruined his health—ruined his character—ruined his family! How many has sin brought to an hospital, to a workhouse, to a jail, to the gallows, to the grave!

You will not believe the ruin because you do not *see* it; but when seen, it will be too late to escape. In other cases of threatened danger, you give credit to the testimony of a friend, perhaps of a stranger. If I solemnly and affectionately say to a traveller—"My good sir! venture not through that water which overflows the road; it is deep; it is dangerous; and two men have been drowned there this morning;" you would pause and ponder; and not hastily rush into ruin. If I say to another, "Proceed no further on the road this evening; a desperate gang of thieves lie in wait at such a spot, and several persons have already been robbed;" regard to your property and your life would make you listen to the warning, though it might oppose your inclination and your convenience. If credible merchants assure you that a city, which you wish to visit, upon business or pleasure, is at this time ravaged by the plague or yellow fever, you will carefully avoid the contagious spot, and be thankful for the important though unwelcome information. Why then, should not sin, ruinous sin, be shunned? Sin, which is far more dangerous and destructive

than water, or thieves, or fever; and the testimony given concerning its danger far more weighty and powerful than that of the most credible mortals; for it is the testimony of the God of truth himself, who cannot lie and will not deceive.

Believe then the testimony of God, both concerning the ruin and the remedy. How gracious is it in him to give you warning! This destruction may yet be avoided. This is his kind language. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." To save sinners from ruin, Christ hath died; the gospel is sent to you, inviting you to come to him and find safety; ministers are employed to reason with you, to prevent your ruin; the Bible is put into your hands to direct you to a refuge. Conscience whispers in your ear—"Religion is, after all, the safest course." Will you then resist all this evidence:—reject all these monitors? Is *God* merciful to you, and will you be unmerciful to yourself? Are you so in love with ruin, that you will not be persuaded to avoid it? What can be so reasonable as an immediate application to Christ for help? What folly and madness can be equal to a neglect of the means of security? All things are ready. Come then to Jesus, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in him, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." His "name is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." "*So iniquity shall not be your ruin.*"



# SERMON LIX.

GEN. XIX. 24, 25, 26.

*Then the* LORD *rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the* LORD *out of heaven: and he overthrew those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.*

THE apostle Jude, exhorting Christians to constancy in the faith, reminds them of the terrible judgments of God upon fallen angels—upon his people Israel—and upon the inhabitants of Sodom. Of the latter he thus speaks, (ver. 7.)—"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Examples of this kind are not for imitation, but for caution, for warning, for admonition; that all sinners, in all ages, may avoid the destruction, by avoiding the sin.

The history before us is of a very affecting, yet of a very instructive, kind, to which we shall do

well to give the most serious attention. We shall arrange the most striking circumstances of it under the three following heads:—

1. The destruction of Sodom;
2. The deliverance of Lot; and,
3. The apostacy of his wife.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM and some neighbouring cities was occasioned by their extreme wickedness. "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Gen. xiii. 13. The country in which they lived was remarkably beautiful and fertile, "it was well-watered every where, even as the garden of the Lord," described in the second chapter of this book; and much resembled some of the finest parts of Egypt. Prosperity, however, without grace, is a dangerous snare to the soul. The goodness of God should have led them to repentance and obedience; but on the contrary, "this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." Ezek. xvi. 49. Their plenty only pampered their bodies, and became fuel to their lusts; while abundance of idleness furnished them with those opportunities of indulgence, which honest industry would have prevented. They were uncommonly and outrageously wicked; they gave themselves up to fornication, and to still more vile affections: instead of being ashamed of their sins, they proclaimed them openly, and gloried in their shame. Neither was this the horrid depravity of a few individuals; it was general; it was almost universal; there were not ten persons in it, including the family of Lot, who were free from the dreadful contagion.

These sins are said, (ver. 20,) to *cry*—"*The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great.*" Atrocious sins cry to God for vengeance; they demand a period to that patience which has borne with them so long; they require that the earth should be cleared from

such monsters of iniquity; and that a holy God should rise, and manifest his just indignation against them.

God, who is slow to anger, at length arose to judgment. He first revealed his design to Abraham, who lived a few miles off, and who interceded in the most earnest manner for them; and had there been but ten righteous men in Sodom, it would have been spared for their sakes; such is the gracious regard which God bears to those who fear him. The angels, who were appointed to be the executioners of divine wrath, entered Sodom in the evening; and, appearing as human travellers, were gladly welcomed to the hospitable abode of Lot. There they soon had ocular proof of the dreadful depravity, impudence, and violence of the people. Lot, who reproved them for their conduct, was insulted and exposed to imminent danger, and was rescued from their violent hands, only by the supernatural interference of the angels, who smote the clamorous mob with blindness.

Immediate ruin had then become inevitable; and no respite could be allowed but that which was necessary for the safety of Lot.

Early in the morning, probably at day-break, this good man, his wife, and daughters, were obliged, by a gracious violence, to leave the city, and betake themselves to a place of refuge. When this was effected, and Lot was safe in Zoar—"*Then*," says our text, "*Then* the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven."

How sudden and unexpected was this calamity! "The sun was risen upon the earth." As yet, many who had been revelling in the night were fast asleep in their beds. Others were rising to pursue the business, or enjoy the pleasures, of the day. Even they who had been warned of the danger were perfectly secure. "Peace and safety" was their cry, when, alas! sudden destruction was just

at hand. Our Saviour refers to this, Luke xvii. 28. "They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." They were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear; and indeed, thus it is with sinners in general, even with those who die on their beds; the most awful warnings excite no alarm, men perceive no danger, and death itself strikes the fatal blow in an unexpected moment.

How peculiar, and how tremendous was this destruction! A deluge of water was once the instrument of divine vengeance, overwhelming a guilty world; but who ever heard of a deluge of fire? All the elements are at the disposal of their Maker, whether for the purposes of wrath or of mercy. Now, indeed, was "the wrath of God revealed *from heaven!*" The expression is singular—"The LORD rained"—"from the LORD."—The LORD the Son, from the LORD the Father, as some interpret the words; at least it means that JEHOVAH himself sent down this fiery shower; it was his own supernatural act, and not the effect of ordinary causes. Doubtless it was a method of destruction most singular and most dreadful: alluding to this, the Psalmist says, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." The consternation of this awful hour was, probably, enhanced by the most vivid and frequent flashes of lightning; by tremendous peals of thunder; and by repeated shocks of earthquake. Ah! who can describe, or even conceive, what terror and dismay seized every guilty heart, when this universal desolation overwhelmed them; and when these sulphureous flames on earth were about to convey them to everlasting burnings, to "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever!"

Thus were the numerous inhabitants of five populous cities, and perhaps a greater number of vil-

lages, at once consumed, and blotted out from the land of the living! Thus were many thousands of guilty rebels hurried away by the most awful kind of death, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire."

The country itself, once a terrestrial paradise, became the durable monument of this awful event—"it is brimstone, and salt, and burning: it is not sown nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein." Deut. xxix. 3. The scene of this desolation is now called the *Dead Sea*, because, say some, no animal lives in it. According to Josephus, it is about seventy miles in length, and about twenty in breadth: the ruins of Sodom were formerly visible; and a peculiar substance, called bitumen, or asphaltus, is yet found in it.

But let us turn, in the *second* place, to a more pleasing part of the subject, THE DELIVERANCE OF LOT—"*righteous Lot*," as the scripture calls him.

Lot, having been educated by Abraham, the father of the faithful, was no doubt fully instructed in the knowledge of God, nor did he receive this instruction in vain. It is a great privilege for young people to dwell in a pious house, and enjoy the prayers and the example of a believing relative. Some, indeed, despise this advantage; but many like Lot, will have cause eternally to be thankful for it.

In consequence, however, of the great increase of his worldly substance, he separates from his uncle, and chooses for his residence the fertile meadows of Sodom. In this choice he seems to have been influenced by motives too worldly and carnal. Here, indeed, his wealth increased for a time; but ere long, a war breaking out in the country, Sodom was seized and plundered by the enemy, his flocks and herds removed, and himself taken prisoner. By the gallant behaviour of Abraham, however, he

recovered his liberty and his property, and settled again in the same pleasant but ungodly spot.

In this horribly wicked place, he was enabled to maintain his integrity, to keep himself free from the vices of his neighbours, and conduct himself as became a worshipper of Jehovah. But he was far from being happy. He could not be an unconcerned spectator of the enormous wickedness of the inhabitants. St. Peter says, "He was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds." It was much to his honour that he felt this abhorrence of sin; but he must feel reproved continually, for fixing his residence in such an abandoned place.

It is the unavoidable lot of some to dwell among the profane; and happy are they who can withstand the torrent of sin; who have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but," like Lot, "reprove them." Yet, let every one who values the salvation of his soul avoid, if possible, such a dangerous situation; for no worldly gain can compensate for the evil to which it exposes him; and few, too few, like Lot, preserve themselves untainted from the general pollution. "They who will be rich," even at the hazard of their souls, too frequently "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; they err from the faith, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows." This consideration should be duly weighed by parents, in their choice of schools for the education of their children, and in placing them abroad in the world for business; it should weigh with servants in the choice of their situations (as far as choice is practicable to them); it should render persons of every description cautious in the selection of their companions, especially in the choice of a companion for life; and indeed, in every step of

their affairs: for many venture, like Lot, into a Sodom; but few, like him, escape unhurt. Every one has not Lot's fortitude; every one has not an Abraham to pray for him.

The hospitality of Lot in entertaining the illustrious strangers, is recommended to our imitation; for he "entertained angels unawares." By them he was informed of the destruction which they were commissioned to execute upon Sodom and its inhabitants. "We will destroy this place," said they, "because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." But he was permitted, and advised, to give immediate warning to his relations. In the course of the night he repairs to their habitations, though probably with great peril to his own person: he calls them up; he warns them as a prophet; he intreats them as a parent. "Up," said he, "get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." But his sons-in-law rejected the warning with disdain. "He seemed as one that mocked unto them." They had been used to jesting, and they treated this as a jest. "Why should to-morrow differ from other days? Who ever saw it rain fire? Or whence should that brimstone come?" "Thus," saith Bishop Hall, "to carnal men, preaching is foolishness; devotion idleness; the prophets madmen; Paul a babbler. These men's incredulity is as worthy of the fire, as the others' uncleanness. '*He that believeth not is condemned already.*'"

But now the moment of danger is at hand. No time must be lost. The angels *hasten* Lot, saying. "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." But, alas! even Lot himself *lingered.* Who can conceive the agitation and distress of his mind, on leaving all his property to be destroyed, and his married daughters to be burned to death! No wonder that he lingered; but "the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and

upon the hand of his two unmarried daughters,—*the Lord being merciful unto him,* and they brought him forth, and set him without the city."

O how often do persons under convictions of sin and danger *linger!* They are satisfied that they ought to separate themselves from the wicked world, and immediately fly from the wrath to come; but they still delay; they are unwilling to leave their connexions; to forsake all and follow Christ. Nor is the case decided, till the Lord exerts his constraining power and grace; and, as it were by a holy violence, "plucks them as brands out of the fire."

Being now brought out of the city, the angels who were to destroy it, take their leave; but with this advice, given with a most gracious vehemence—"Escape for thy life—look not behind thee—neither stay thou in all the plain—escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed," ver. 17. It is in this manner that sinners are warmly exhorted by the word of God, to come forth from their spiritual Sodom, from their state of sin and danger." "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." We would "save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire." It is for your lives! Escape, or perish! Repent, or perish! Be converted, or perish!

The Lord was pleased to direct Lot whither to fly for refuge. "Escape to the mountain." As the whole valley was devoted to destruction, the distant hills were appointed as a place of safety. But Lot, aged, weary, and frightened, probably thinking his strength insufficient to reach one of them, requested leave to retire to a small town that was nearer.—"Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. O let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?") This was his infirmity; for God who had brought him out, and directed him to the mountain, was surely able to strengthen him to reach it. It is dangerous to choose for ourselves, and so the sequel of the story proves; for though his request was granted, and Zoar spared for his sake, yet it ap-

pears that he was afterwards obliged to leave it, and dwell in a lonely cave; where, alas! he was tempted to a great sin. How much better then would it have been at once to obey the heavenly order, and take refuge in the appointed mountain; thither God would have graciously conducted him, and there, doubtless, he would have been safe.

When a sinner forsakes his evil ways, the gospel directs him to Christ as the only refuge, the only "deliverer from divine wrath." But how many are disposed to tarry in the plain; to rest in reformation and morality merely; or to resort to some other shelter of their own devising. Never should a sinner rest, till, by faith, he hath fled to Jesus, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" till Jesus is made to him "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Then he is safe.

Lot, his wife, and daughters, being delivered from Sodom, and on their way to Zoar—all seemed to be well. Lot, no doubt, remembered the divine injunction—"*Look not behind thee.*" God's law, in the least command, as well as in the greatest, is holy, and just, and good: he had wise reasons for this prohibition. Lot must not look back; for it would argue his unwillingness to leave Sodom and his possessions there; it might intimate his doubt whether the threatening would be accomplished; at any rate it would occasion some delay; he therefore obeys, proceeds, and at length gains the wished-for asylum. Not so his wife: she looks back, and perishes: and this is the

*Third* particular which remains to be considered, THE APOSTACY OF LOT'S WIFE. "She looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

That this very singular and very awful circumstance deserves particular consideration is evident from the use which our Lord makes of it, (Luke

xvii. 32.) where he says to his disciples, "*Remember Lot's wife.*"

In the flight of the family; it is probable that Lot, more fully convinced of the approaching danger than the rest, took the lead. His wife, not sufficiently attentive to the strict prohibition, "*Look not behind,*" was inclined, by some motive or other, to stop; to turn round, and gaze upon the devoted city. Perhaps a trifler will say, and what great harm was there in that? I answer, much every way. It was an act of *disobedience;* and disobedience is the very essence of sin. It was a contempt of the divine authority, which is equally to be regarded in those things which may seem to us small, as in those which are apparently great. Her sin was aggravated by her *ingratitude.* It was losing sight of the great goodness of God in delivering the family, and distinguishing them from the thousands about to perish. God resents, with peculiar indignation, this brutish disregard of his singular mercies.

Probably there was a mixture of *unbelief* in her offence. She turned and stopped to see whether the threatened danger was likely to ensue or not. So many persons among ourselves will believe nothing but what they can see or account for; let them "remember Lot's wife."

But *love of the world* was doubtless her principal sin. She felt a strong attachment to the place, to the people, and to her worldly substance, now left behind; and perhaps entertained a hope that the destruction would not take place, and that she might yet return to the beloved spot.

Indulging these sinful thoughts and affections, she stood gazing on the city, as yet in prospect, till the horrible storm overtook her. Struck dead, probably, by a flash of lightning, she was miraculously kept erect; and soon incrusted by a shower of that nitro-sulphureous matter, which desolated the whole country: she became a pillar of salt, and

there remained, as we learn, not only from scripture, but from several ancient and creditable historians, a standing monument, for many ages, of the divine wrath against apostacy.

What must have been the terror of righteous Lot, when he entered Zoar, and missed the partner of his life! Anxious fears for her safety would immediately arise in his heart. When the dreadful storm had subsided, he would doubtless go in search of her; but who can conceive of his astonishment and grief, when he found her transformed into a rock of salt! What an awful addition was this to the loss of all his property, and of his two children, who had perished in the flames! Such, though his life was spared, were the dreadful effects of his worldly-mindedness, in settling among the abominable criminals of this country.

And now what remains, but that we select, and fix deeply on our hearts, some of the important lessons which this awful history is intended to teach us.

Surely we must be struck, in the first place, with the extreme depravity of human nature, and the dreadful lengths to which it may proceed, unless restrained by the power of God. We look with just concern on the guilty cities of the plain; but are there not with us, even with us, sins, and crying sins too, against the Lord? Even the sins of Sodom are committed in England; yea, it may be said to people called Christians, "Sodom hath not done as thou hast done!" Far greater are our privileges than Sodom ever possessed, and our sins are consequently more aggravated than theirs. May we not then fear a just punishment? God is now, and always, the hater of sin; and though a punishment like Sodom's may not fall upon us in this world, yet he who is to be our Judge hath said, and he says it to us as much as to the Jews—"It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day

of judgment," than for those who hear the gospel, but reject its evidences, and neglect its salvation.

Hear then, O sinner! the warning voice of the gospel, before the storm of wrath comes down. Escape for thy life—Look not behind thee—Tarry not in all the plain—Escape to the mountain—Flee to the Friend of sinners, who will grant thee refuge, pardon, grace, and eternal life.

What an awful lesson is here against apostacy! O let the Saviour's caution resound in our ears—"Remember Lot's wife!" Yes! let us remember her, so as not to imitate her. If you have turned your backs upon the world, then give it up altogether. Will you regret the loss of that company, of those amusements, or even of that property which would have ruined your souls for ever? God forbid! Be thankful, and remember St. Paul. Say with him, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To him be all honour and glory, world without end! Amen.

*Irresolution reproved, and Decision recommended.*

# SERMON LX.

1 Kings xviii. 21.

*And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the* LORD *be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.*

IN various periods of human life, and particularly in youth, there is a remarkable hesitation as to the choice a person shall make. On the one hand, Religion demands his attention; sets before him the destructive consequences of sin, and the necessity of forsaking it; requires him to relinquish the bewitching vanities of the world, and offers him in their stead the pleasures of a good conscience, and an eternal weight of glory in the future world. But, nearer at hand, the smiling World presents her flattering joys; invites him immediately to taste her delights, and leave both the bitters and sweets of religion to another day.

Are there any here who thus hesitate?—"I have a message from God unto you:" the message which Elijah delivered to the tribes of Israel on a most solemn occasion, when hesitating whether to worship Jehovah or Baal. "How long halt ye between

two opinions? If Jehovah be the true God, let him alone be worshipped; but, if Baal can prove his divinity, let him have your adoration."

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided; two tribes only, besides that of Levi, adhered to the family of David, and these kept up the worship of Jehovah: the other ten tribes revolted under Jeroboam, and set up the idolatrous worship of Baal. The country of the latter was in extreme misery, having been punished with drought for more than three years. Elijah, a bold and zealous prophet of Jehovah, requests Ahab the king, one of Jeroboam's successors, to collect the people and the priests of Baal; which he did. He then makes a proposal. "Let them give us," said he, "two bullocks—let them choose one for themselves, and give us the other. Let the priests of Baal prepare their beast for sacrifice, and lay it on wood; but put no fire under. I will do the same with the other bullock. Let them then call on the name of their gods, and I will call upon the name of Jehovah, and that god that answereth by fire, let him be God." This proposal was so fair that no person objected. But in vain did the votaries of Baal pray, and cry for his interposition by fire from heaven; "there was no voice, nor any that answered." At length Elijah, having ordered a large quantity of water to be poured on his offering, to prevent the least suspicion of deceit, called upon Jehovah, saying, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel." Immediately the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the whole sacrifice; when the people, being fully convinced, fell on their faces and said, "The LORD he is the God! the LORD he is the God!"

O that a decision equally happy may crown our present discourse! Some probably are hesitating—halting between two opinions; let me, in my humble measure, imitate the holy prophet, and expos-

tulate with you, "How long halt ye? Why hesitate any longer? If the religion of Jesus be true, and holy, and good, why neglect to be seriously religious? If the way of sin and folly be safe and right; if God and conscience approve; and you are sure that it will end well—then pursue it without reserve."

I flatter myself that you will favour me with your serious attention to what I shall offer upon the two following observations:—

1. Many persons, and young persons especially, are irresolute and changeable with respect to religion.
2. Such is the reality, pleasure, and advantage of true religion, that it deserves and demands our whole hearts; and we ought not to hesitate a moment about giving them fully to it.

Let us *first* observe, (and who has *not* observed it?) that many persons seem to hesitate, and show that they are irresolute and undetermined, whether they shall be religious or not.

It must I think be admitted, that there is something in religion so solemn and so grand, that it can scarcely fail, if at all regarded, to affect and interest the human mind. When the glorious perfections of the Almighty Being are displayed; when the deformity, turpitude, and mischief of sin are exposed; when the wisdom and grace of the redemption of Christ are unfolded; when the awful solemnities of death and judgment are described; or, when the astonishing realities of heaven and hell are exhibited; that heart must be hard, beyond the common degree of hardness, that does not feel a religious impression. The unhappy mortal accustomed to gross and brutal inattention, or the frivolous creature habituated to excessive levity, or the haughty rationalist who has been cheated into

infidelity, may perhaps contrive to resist the impression; but it is with difficulty resisted, and if the darkness be preferred to the light, it is only because the opposer's deeds are evil.

Those persons who attend the house of God, especially those who hear a faithful and able preacher of the gospel, can scarcely fail to be seriously impressed at times. To every such minister it may be said, as of old it was said to Ezekiel, "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument:"—they are surprised with the grandeur of his subjects, affected with the sublimity of his ideas, charmed with the elegance of his language—are as well pleased, almost, as at an oratorio or a play: but this is not all; "for," it is added, "they hear thy words, but they do them not." This temporary affection is justly described by St. James—the mere hearer resembles "a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."—The word of God is a faithful mirror: the *law* discovers our sinful spots; the *gospel* displays the cleansing blood of Christ. Many a hearer catches a glance of his spots, but does not dwell on the deformity; he goes his way; returns to the vain and busy world, and forgets to apply to the purifying fountain; it is only he who *attentively* looks into the gospel, and *continueth* therein; steadily regards and retains the truth; it is only he that is "blessed in his deed."

When the word of God is seconded by some alarming and painful providence, deep impressions are sometimes felt. Sickness and solitude bring men to themselves. Affliction obliges them to withdraw from the busy and gaudy scenes of temptation, and if conscience obtain leave to speak, it will plead in behalf of religion. It will accuse for past delay. It will urge to holy resolution. If

death enter the house, and seize one of the family, O how awfully important does religion then appear, and how frequently are some vices abandoned, and some duties commenced! But the heart soon heals; the world regains its dominion, and the sinner hesitates as before.

It is the privilege of some young persons, to have at hand the most faithful and the most affectionate of all preachers—a pious and indulgent parent. Wisely catching the favourable moment, he drops a serious hint on the worth of the soul, the uncertainty of life, the approach of death; he recommends, from the experience of years, the excellence of religion, and says that "the Saviour's yoke is easy, and his burden light." The youth not yet hardened by the society of the vicious and the infidel, the tender female especially, heaves a sigh, or drops a tear in unison with that of the parent; perhaps almost wishes to be religious, to gratify the desires of a dear father or mother, knowing that nothing upon earth would be esteemed, by an affectionate parent, a blessing half so great as their sincere piety.

In this state the person resembles king Agrippa, who, under the temporary impression of St. Paul's preaching, was constrained to say—"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"—almost! alas! *only* almost, not altogether persuaded; some secret reserve is yet made, the strong hold of the heart is yet in possession of sin, which, without the interposition of almighty grace, will ere long regain all its former dominion.

The bewitching pleasures of sin once more begin to court the soul: some youthful lusts present their flattering baits to the senses, and find within a party eager to catch at them. We are fallen creatures; our minds are become carnal; and we have a strong propensity to indulge the flesh. The seed of every sin is deposited in our corrupt nature; and though the seed may long continue dormant; yet

if, like a vegetable seed that has been buried deep in the earth, it be brought towards the surface, and placed in a favourable situation, it will unfold all its hidden powers, and ripen into open transgression. Such is the fascinating power of sin, especially when become habitual, that it will insist upon indulgence at any rate; even at the expense of fortune, character, and life itself. And now, all those promising appearances before spoken of, disappear and are covered, like the writing on the sea-shore, with the overwhelming tide.

The strong attraction of evil company is another source of danger. Man is formed *for* society: and we may add, he is formed *by* his society, whether it be good or evil. When Satan sinned and fell, he speedily drew man into the same condemnation. When Eve was prevailed upon to taste the forbidden fruit, she hastened to induce her husband to commit the same transgression. It is observable what pains are usually taken by the votaries of pleasure, and of vice, to lead their companions into the same; how strongly do they solicit the young and the unsuspecting, to become parties in their ensnaring amusements and dangerous pleasures! Not content with their own sin and ruin, they become the missionaries of Satan, and labour to make proselytes for hell. But, O that the advice of the wise man were regarded—"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

The fear of shame on account of religion keeps many in a hesitating state. Glorious and highly honourable as the religion of Jesus certainly is, the advocates of sin will pretend that it is a mean and low thing, not fit for persons of discernment, of taste, of fashion; they will say, that to be moved with religious affections is to be irrational and enthusiastic; and that your religious people, with all their pretensions, are only concealed hypocrites, and all their devotion merely whining and cant. Here, perhaps, the youth is brought to a stand.

"Shall I then," says he, "encounter all this shame and disgrace? Must I, if religious, be treated with contempt by the world in general? Who can endure this?"

But stop, my friend, and let us argue this matter. What do you blush at? Are you ashamed of acknowledging your Creator, and bowing the knee before your Redeemer? Is it an unreasonable thing to credit the God of truth, or to love him who is infinitely amiable? Is it mean and base to secure your everlasting happiness, even while at the same time you are promoting your best interest upon earth? If you are tempted to yield to the world because it forms the great majority, you are in a mistake. "There are more, far more with us than with them." I know that the visible crowd of deceived mortals take part against religion, but what are they compared with those who espouse it? Is not the great and eternal God with us? Does not he approve the humble and the pious soul? Is not Jesus, the glorious Saviour, with us? He was once himself despised and rejected of men on account of his piety; and now he is exalted on the throne of glory, he knows how to pity and defend his persecuted people. On our side we boast the innumerable tribes of angels, whose business and delight it is to minister to the heirs of salvation. Shall we be ashamed to do the will of God on earth, as angels do it in heaven? This is our prayer: shall it not be our practice too? With us we associate all the spirits of just men made perfect, who, like an immense cloud of spectators, seem to look down upon us to animate us in our Christian course. Are *they* ashamed of their former diligence in religion? Why then should we? Yea, we may add, (awful thought!)—the myriads of the damned, whose dwelling is in darkness and despair, are now of our mind. Once they laughed at the religious, but now their language is—"This is he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach:

we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" *Wisdom of Solomon*, v. 4.

There is yet another cause of hesitation: it is temporal advantage. "Must I incur," says the halting professor, "must I incur the displeasure of my superiors, who despise religion, and who will despise *me* for it? Must I venture on the anger of a beloved parent, the displeasure of an indulgent husband, or the resentment of a generous patron?" I answer, you are only to determine whether it be better to obey God or man. You are to remember that "one thing is needful," even the care of the soul, which must be preferred to every temporal good: and you should recollect that if you "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, every earthly blessing, that is good for you, shall be added thereto." Call to mind the wise and holy conduct of Moses, who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" and this he did "by faith;" for he renounced the prospects of worldly wealth, in expectation of the recompence of the eternal reward. Go thou and do likewise.

Thus, then, we see the tempted soul halting between two opinions. At one time, religion appears not only necessary, but excellent and beautiful: the sabbath a sweet day of devotional rest: the house of God has a thousand charms to invite attendance; the Bible, a book of sacred instruction and entertainment; and prayer, a rational and delightful employment. But, through the power of temptation, at another time the scene is changed. Insensibly mixing with men of the world, the heart is seduced again; and gaiety, music, dress, and dancing, assume new charms, and captivate the affections. Then religion sinks in the scale. Religion seems to wear a frowning aspect; the cavils of the infidel gather weight and importance; and infidelity pro-

mises, not future happiness, but present gratification, and that without the restraints which were feared before. Religion offers to make the man a saint; but as this appears too laborious, he relinquishes the future hope, and inclines to become a happy brute.

But still the mind is unsettled. Conscience is on the Lord's side. Something within yet withholds assent, and fears that all will not end well at last. The very sight of a good man will shake its confidence. A tolling bell, the view of a funeral, the news of a sudden death, or the apprehension of a fit of sickness, will excite alarm; and a faithful sermon will make the man, like Felix, tremble. How many have we known who, when spectators of the death of others, or under apprehension of their own, have found their ground untenable, and have admitted that there is a reality in religion, and that it is necessary to their peace. Should the reader be disposed to make such a concession, he will be prepared to hear,

2. That such is the reality, pleasure, and advantage of true religion, that it deserves and demands our whole hearts.

In the case before us, the question was "Who is God—Jehovah, or Baal?" It was agreed, before the decision was made, that the true God should be followed, the false deserted. Would to God the same determination were made in all our minds! If religion be real, pleasant, and profitable, we will embrace it, let the consequence be what it may. The trial was made. Baal's votaries sought him in vain—"there was no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." But when the prophet of Jehovah cried—"Let it be known this day that thou art God, and that I am thy servant;" then the fire of the Lord descended, dried up the water, and consumed the sacrifice. The people were convinced, worshipped God, and destroyed his enemies. So

let it be with us; if it can be made to appear that our religion is of God, then let us be truly religious and destroy whatever impediment opposes its power and perfection.

But you will say, what do you mean by religion? The question is good. I will answer it. I mean by religion not a system of opinions, nor a set of ceremonies; but a humbling conviction of our ruined state by sin; the application of the soul to Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour; and a sincere endeavour to oppose sin, and live unto holiness. This is real religion; the religion of the gospel; the religion which the Holy Spirit teacheth, and which the disciple of Jesus learneth. It is for the mind to be enlightened, so as to discover the holy character of God; to see our own deformity in the glass of his holy law; to be humbled in the dust as penitent sinners; and then, heartily to embrace the salvation proclaimed by the gospel; to receive Jesus as our teacher, our righteousness, and our Lord, and to give up ourselves, without reserve, to be his for ever.

This religion is a glorious reality. It is scriptural; it is rational; it is experimental; it is practical. It answers the true ends of religion; it makes us holy and happy. It renews the heart; it reforms the manners; and it secures eternal bliss.

This is the religion which, for substance, has been the choice and the practice of all the wise and good men who ever lived, from the days of Abel until now. This is the religion we affirm to be every way pleasant and advantageous; for it includes the sublime delight of a good conscience; a conscience delivered from guilt by the atoning blood of Christ; the inexpressible pleasure of communion with God in his ordinances, public and private; the privilege of society with the excellent of the earth; preservation from a thousand mischiefs and miseries to which the irreligious are liable; it affords a solid ground of consolation in the unavoidable evils of

life; and it sustains the soul amidst the awful circumstances of death, with a lively hope, full of immortality.

These, and many more, are the *present* advantages of true godliness: but who can describe those which are to come? Who can tell what are the joys at God's right hand—what it is to be with Christ and behold his glory—what it is to enter into the joy of the Lord; to see him as he is; to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; to spend eternal ages in the beatific presence of God and the Lamb?

These then are the blessings of that holy religion which demands our whole hearts. And do we still hesitate—still halt between two opinions? Surely this hesitation is quite unreasonable, and unlike any thing in our ordinary conduct. Does the sick man hesitate whether to accept of health, if it be in his power? Does the poor man hesitate when relief, when wealth is offered to him? Does the dutiful youth require a moment to determine whether or not he should love his father or his mother? Do we stop to enquire whether health and life ought to be preserved? If not, why halt between two opinions in the greater concern of eternal life and salvation? If we halt it is a proof that we are not convinced of its necessity or its advantage. But have we not sufficiently proved that such is the reality, pleasure, and advantage of the religion of Christ, that it deserves and demands our whole hearts? Now, then, let the matter be brought to a final issue! Now let the awful decision be made! —Witness, ye angels! ye benevolent spirits, who frequent our religious assemblies, and sometimes carry the glad tidings of a sinner's conversion to heaven, witness the decision which shall now be made!

"Choose then, this day," this moment, "whom you will serve. If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

Only remember, "ye cannot serve two masters." God will not accept of a divided heart. Does your heart say—"God forbid that we should forsake the Lord?" Does it say, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord?" Then be it so. From this happy moment, let it be a settled point; religion, serious religion, vital religion, shall be my first great business, and every thing that opposes it shall give place. So say, and so do, my brethren, and you are made for ever. Shall I then add, as Joshua in a similar case, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses." May God confirm your resolution, and by his almighty grace ever enable you to act comformably to it!

# SERMON LXI.

ROM. VI. 14.

*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

THE general power and prevalence of sin in the world is a most affecting consideration to a serious mind. He who knows how displeasing sin is to a holy God, and how destructive to the souls of men, cannot but lament the awful dominion it retains, even in a Christian country, where the will of God is revealed, where the consequences of sin are exposed, and where a sufficient remedy against it, is presented.

This remedy, however rejected by many, is most thankfully received by a true Christian, who esteems a deliverance from the power of sin no less than a freedom from the guilt of it. If his first inquiry be "What shall I do to be saved?" his next is, "Who shall deliver me from this body of sin?" Blessed be God, the gospel furnishes us with a satisfactory answer to both these enquiries. The Redeemer of men "came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood." The water and the blood which flowed from his wounded side was an admirable emblem of the double design of his death, which was both to justify and to sanctify—to discharge from guilt, and to cleanse from pollution. Sin shall not condemn the believer because Christ hath died; sin shall not govern the believer, because he is under grace.

This comfortable declaration of the apostle is here introduced in consequence of a supposed objection

to the glorious doctrines and privileges asserted in the former chapters of this epistle, particularly in the conclusion of the 5th chapter—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"—as the exceeding sinfulness of sin is manifested by the law, so the super-abounding grace of God in the pardon of sin is made gloriously conspicuous by the gospel. To this illustrious truth, some pharisaical or some licentious person may object, and connect with it this base inference—"Let us continue in the practice of sin, that this famous grace may abound so much the more in pardoning us." But does the holy apostle allow this interference to be just? No: his heart rises with indignation at the thought of such an abuse of divine grace; and he shews that believers in Christ were, by their profession and their baptism, dead to sin, and engaged to imitate their Saviour in all holy obedience; to which he adds the encouraging declaration in the text—"Sin shall not have dominion over *you*,"—over you *believers*; and for this reason—"ye are not under the law but under *grace*."

To a sincere disciple of Christ, freedom from the power of sin is a most desirable blessing; his desires, his prayers, his endeavours are continually directed to this point: whatever, therefore, may assist him in the attainment of this great object, will be truly welcome. This text, then, which shews the means appointed of God for the purpose of delivering us from sin, demands our most careful attention. May the Holy Spirit assist and succeed our meditations, while we consider

I. The evil which we are encouraged to resist; and

II. The means afforded for our encouragement in resisting it.

I. The evil which, as Christians, we are encouraged to resist is—the dominion of sin. In this

chapter St. Paul represents sin as a master, and men as his servants—sin as a lord, and men as his vassals.—He considers sin as a mighty usurper, exercising absolute dominion over the sinner; taking the sinner's heart for his throne, and the members of his body for his slaves. "Ye were," saith he, "the servants of sin; sin reigned in your mortal bodies, so that ye obeyed the lusts thereof; sin abounded; sin reigned unto death." By these strong expressions he represents the uncontrolled power of sin over the natural man; who refuses submission to the easy yoke of God's authority, and tamely submits to the destructive drudgery of the tyrant of hell.

By a successful stratagem, sin obtained the supremacy over our first father; and his posterity, while they remain in their natural state, have never been able to break the yoke. Sin has reigned, and death has reigned, from that time to the present. No monarchy can pretend to an antiquity equal with this; nor has any monarchy been so extensive as this. Whatever have been the variations of climate, colour, or customs, sin has been uniform in maintaining its empire. Go into all nations; and whether you call them Pagan, or Mahometan, or Jewish; whether barbarous or civilized, you must call them all sinners. In our own country, enlightened as it is, full of churches and Bibles as it is, sin reigns; sin has the dominion over Britons, the few excepted, whom the Son of God has made free. This awful representation of the matter is justified by the apostle John, who says—"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness," or, "is in subjection to the wicked one." This dreadful dominion of sin is promoted by various means.

1. By ignorance of God's will. In some countries this is almost total; in ours it is partial, and in a great measure wilful. If *we* do not know our master's will, it is because we do not wish to know

it; it is because we do not "like to retain God in our knowledge;" it is because we "love darkness better than light, our deeds being evil." And this, no doubt, is a principal cause, that so many forsake the house of God, and neglect to read their Bibles; they are not disposed to do the will of God; why then should they learn it?

2. Our corrupt passions and sensual propensities reject divine control. O how strongly are we inclined to evil! Beloved lusts will be gratified, though health, reputation, yea, life itself are at stake! How abominable and filthy is man, "who drinketh iniquity like water!" "who draweth iniquity with cords of vanity, and sins as it were with a cart-rope." So doth God, by his prophets, describe the determined actings of sin in the corrupt nature of man.

3. The power of sin is promoted by the worldly interests of men, to which they readily give the decided preference, when they happen to clash with their duty to God. When profit may be obtained, when pleasure may be enjoyed, farewell duty! farewell the will of God! farewell heaven! They will sacrifice conscience and their everlasting interests to the gratification of the moment. Thus, for the sake of the world, the guests invited to the gospel-feast, with one consent desired to be excused; and the rich man departed from Jesus full of sorrow.

4. The dominion of sin is promoted by the powerful temptations of Satan; he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; he presents the pleasures of sin in the most alluring colours; he hides from men the pernicious consequences; encourages them to venture boldly on the most daring offences; tells them that God is very merciful, and repentance very easy; and thus supports his cruel empire over the whole world of sinners.

5. The countenance and example of the multi-

tude contribute much to the support of sin's dominion. Sinners readily follow the multitude to do evil. The broad road that leads to destruction is thronged with travellers; and natural men smoothly follow the course of this world. This has a wonderful tendency to silence the remonstrances of conscience, and to prevent that shame which would be unavoidable, were sin less common. Sinners are kept in countenance by the majority of their fellow creatures; if *they* are the slaves of iniquity, so are the greater part of their friends and neighbours; and they are ready to hope that what is so general cannot be dangerous.

Some proceed further, and venture to glory in their shame. "Were they ashamed," said God by the prophet, "when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed: neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord." Jer. vi. 15. It argues an awful degree of hardness of heart, and affords a fear that God has given sinners entirely up, when they not only "commit such things as are worthy of death, but have pleasure in them that do them." Sin is the daily business, the chosen portion of some; they "make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Come ye, say they, "we will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day; and much more abundant."

Such is the dominion of sin! such its absolute power over the children of Adam! such the means whereby it is promoted and maintained.

By some, indeed, it is occasionally opposed. The power of conscience, the influence of education, the exhortations of ministers, the fear of death, or the love of reputation, induce some to oppose its entire dominion. There have been, in all ages, persons smitten with the beauty of virtue, and shocked at the deformity of vice, who have made efforts to

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deliver themselves from the government of sin; but, without the knowledge of Christ, their efforts have proved ineffectual. Many of the heathen philosophers were themselves awful and pitiable proofs of the weakness of fallen nature to contend with the power of sin. Nor have many nominal Christians succeeded much better. Like the formal Jews, they "followed after the law of righteousness," and with great apparent zeal; but they attained it not. What was the cause of their failure? St. Paul says it was—"Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Let us beware of their error. Let us profit by the instruction of the text. This is a light to our feet in this very important matter—"Sin shall not have dominion over *you*."—What shall prevent it? The apostle adds—"*for*, ye are not under the law, but under grace." And this is what we propose to consider,

II. The means afforded for our encouragement in resisting sin: "for ye are not under the *law*, but under *grace*."

Grace is here opposed to the law, and signifies the gospel, which, in scripture, is frequently opposed to it, as in John i. 17. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." The gospel may, with the strictest propriety, be called *grace*, because it is a declaration of the wonderful grace of God in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; and it is so to be understood, 2 Cor. vi. 1. "We beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain;" that is—that ye receive not the doctrine of the gospel unprofitably. So St. Paul exhorted the people of Antioch, "to continue in the grace of God;" Acts xiii. 43; and in another place it is said that "God gave testimony to the word of his grace."

The apostle mentions it as a reason why the believing Romans should not continue under the

power of sin, that they were no longer under the law, but under the gospel; consequently, it appears that those that are under the gospel dispensation, possess greater advantages for the destruction of sin, than those who are under the law.

By the law we are to understand, not the ceremonial or judicial law of Moses, which was peculiar to the Jews; but the moral law, or law of the ten commandments; for it is this law by which the apostle himself learned the true nature of sin, chap. vii. 7; this was the law which he says is "holy, just, good, and spiritual;" the law in which he says, "he delighted after the inward man;" and compared with which he adds, "I am carnal, sold under sin."

This holy law of God was a system of just but awful severity: it was given at Mount Sinai in so tremendous a manner, that Moses himself was exceedingly terrified. But God had wise and holy designs in the establishment of it. "The law entered that the offence might abound:"—it was introduced among the Jews, not that they might be justified by it; but that, by discovering how far they fell short of the obedience it required, and how their native corruption was rather irritated than suppressed by its most holy precepts, they might be more deeply impressed with a sense of their abounding sins; and thus it became (together with the ceremonial law) "a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ;" and to prepare the way for the gospel, in which the grace of God is as eminently conspicuous as his holiness was under the law; and that so, "where sin had abounded, grace might much more abound."

Now, believers in Christ are "not under the law;" they are "dead to the law;" they are "delivered from the law." By these expressions we are not to suppose that they are discharged from their obligation to obedience to God; for the apostle expressly says of himself, 1 Cor. ix. 21. that he was "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ;" but believers are no longer under the law considered as

a covenant, the terms of which are, "the man that doeth them (all and every one perfectly) "shall live in them." Jesus Christ hath fulfilled all righteousness for his people, and is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth. Being accounted righteous through faith in Christ, they are redeemed from the curse of the law; there is no more condemnation to them; and the gospel (which is "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus") hath made them free from the law of sin and death. —Rom. viii. 2.

It should be remembered that while the law justly demanded obedience it afforded no aid for the performance of it. Nor could it encourage any one to hope for pardon in case of disobedience. It must therefore be allowed that the law excited fear and a spirit of bondage, God dealing with his people who were under it rather as servants than as sons.

The case is now altered. We are not called to "Mount Sinai," to hear the terrible threatenings of the law; but we are come to "Mount Sion," where grace, free, sovereign grace, and mercy, are published. Here indeed the holiness and justice of God are also gloriously displayed; but not, as under the law, in demanding from us a perfect unsinning obedience as the condition of life, and in denouncing the just wrath of God upon a defect of it; but in shewing that Jesus Christ, our glorious surety, has magnified the law, and made it eternally honourable, by his own obedience to death in our behalf, on account of which God is now just, while he is the justifier of the ungodly.

The gospel affords another advantage above the law. The law included the substance of all the holy precepts now contained in the New Testament; but in the gospel they are expanded and full blown, and appear in all the loveliness and beauty of holiness. Jesus Christ, our only lawgiver, has divinely explained the duties briefly contained in the decalogue, especially in his admirable sermon on the mount.

And the epistles of his inspired apostles to the churches, adapt the general precepts of the law to every relation and condition of life; shewing exactly the distinct duties of subjects, of husbands, wives, parents, children, servants, members of Christian societies; so that nothing is wanting clearly to disclose the full meaning of the two grand commandments — the supreme love of God, and the disinterested love of our neighbour.

The gospel dispensation is superior to that of the law on another account; there is a more abundant measure of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the people of God, by which they not only attain a clearer knowledge of his will, but a larger degree of his gracious assistance in overcoming sin. It is the peculiar promise of the covenant of grace, Heb. viii. 10. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Now this is far more, and better than having the laws of God written in a book; it includes the renovation of our souls, by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby the mind is divinely enlightened, and the heart powerfully disposed, and enabled to comply with the will of God.

The gospel assures us of sufficient grace for every purpose required. All grace is treasured up in Jesus for the use of his people; in him "all fulness dwells; and "of this fulness they may receive daily, grace for grace."—John i. 46. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace in him as the head of the church; and it is intended for the supply of believers; so that in all their wants and sorrows they may, by prayer and faith, receive abundance of grace. Whatever duties they have to perform, whatever trials they are called to bear, whatever sins they have to oppose, they may depend on sufficient grace for the purpose. On this ground St. Paul boldly says, "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me." He was weak in himself, but strong in the grace that is in Christ

Jesus, who, upon a certain occasion, said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. xii. 9.

The love of Christ is another grand assistant in our victory over sin. Love is the most strong and generous of all the passions, and the hardest service becomes easy when this prevails. This was that which supported the first Christians in their almost incredible labours and sufferings. The lively sense they entertained of his wonderful affection to their souls, in dying for their sins, animated them to the most vigorous exertions in his cause; led them to glory in his cross, and to esteem themselves happy in laying down their lives for his sake. "The love of Christ," said St. Paul, "*constraineth* us"—it *bears us away* like a strong and resistless torrent, 2 Cor. v. 14. while we thus judge, that if Christ died for our redemption, even when we were in a state of condemnation and death, it is fit that our ransomed lives should be sacred to him; this condemnation will have a powerful effect upon the believer when tempted to sin. Shall that sin which Christ hated—that sin for which Christ suffered—that sin which he died to deliver me from, have dominion over me? God forbid! Am I not dead to sin by baptismal engagements and obligations? Am I not baptized into his death?—engaging thereby to be conformed to it? that as he died for it, I should die to it; and that, as he was raised from the dead, so I should arise from the grave of sin, to walk in newness of life? Is not my old man of sin crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth I should not serve sin? Such is the reasoning of the holy apostle in this chapter, and such is the reasoning of every child of God, in his right mind.

The grace of the gospel affords yet further aid in this great conflict, by the cheering views it presents of everlasting glory. We are engaged in a severe warfare, but under the Captain of our salvation, we are assured of victory. Though we have been the

slaves of sin, we may boldly reject its usurped authority, and transfer our faculties to the service of Christ, with the certainty of acceptance and protection. Let our members henceforth be employed as weapons in the Lord's warfare. Unequal as we are to encounter native depravity, inveterate habits of evil, an alluring or threatening world, a raging and subtle devil, when enlisted in Christ's service, we may truly say, "there are more on our side than against us;" yea, "If God be for us," (and he certainly is, if warring against sin) "who can be against us?" Nothing, however hostile and formidable, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Our perseverance to the end is secured by the promise and power of God; and we shall be more than conquerors through him. We shall be enabled to say at the solemn close of life, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Covered with unworthiness and shame, in ourselves considered, we shall be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Such are the solid and sublime hopes of the Christian. And will these have no holy influence upon his conduct? Hear St. John—"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure:" the heirs of glory will disdain the low gratifications and filthy drudgery of sin. They know that their Saviour is holy, the society they expect to join is holy, their employments and delights will be holy; their hope therefore, as well as their faith, will purify their souls, influence their walk, and prevent the dominion of sin.

Who can behold the general dominion of sin over the world without the deepest concern; O that ever this cursed foe to God and man should acquire universal authority! "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the slain of the daughter of my people!" If sin continue to reign, it will reign unto

death; the wages of sin is death. Sin unpardoned, sin unsubdued, must issue in the sinner's everlasting destruction. What then is *my* state? Does sin reign over me: or have I obtained dominion over sin? Let conscience make a sincere inquiry, and report a faithful answer.

Having learned, by this discourse, that no means are effectual to stop the progress of sin, but those afforded by the gospel of grace, let this serve to render the gospel more precious. It is not by the knowledge of the law, nor by endeavours in our own strength to fulfil its precepts, that the power of sin can be destroyed. No: it is only the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation. It is the knowledge of Christ crucified; it is faith in him; it is union to him; it is love to him; it is hope in him; that must invigorate my soul in this holy war. Let me then highly prize the gospel of grace, and earnestly pray for the grace of the gospel; that so, having obeyed from the heart that form (or mould) of doctrine, into which I have been delivered, my whole temper, and life may be transformed into a glorious resemblance of it: being "made free from sin, and become a servant of God, my fruit may be unto holiness, and my end everlasting life."

This subject effectually refutes that vile slander which is so unjustly cast on the doctrines of grace, as if they were conducive to sin, and unfriendly to holiness. The very reverse is the truth; for, while the professed advocates of righteousness by the law can make no effectual stand against the power of sin, but are commonly its wretched vassals; humble believers in Jesus, justified by his blood, and saved alone by grace, are enabled to fight the good fight of faith, and subdue their most powerful iniquities; and thus, "grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." To whom, the Conqueror over sin, and death, and hell, be glory in all the churches, world without end! Amen.

# SERMON LXII.

ZECHARIAH xiv. 20.

*In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses—*
*HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.*

THE predictions of the prophet in this chapter appear to refer to the times of the gospel, when the word of Christ should be propagated far and wide; and when the kingdom of Messiah should be generally established. Perhaps the text itself may be a prediction of the latter-day glory, when the knowledge of Christ shall cover the whole earth; and when the holiness of God's people shall be remarkably great and glorious, so that in all their conversation, and in all their actions, civil as well as religious, one uniform tenour of holiness will appear. Should this be the special design of the words, it will, nevertheless, be allowed, that at all times, and in all places, "Holiness becometh the house of the Lord;" and that it is his royal will and pleasure, that all who name the name of Christ should depart from all iniquity.

This holiness, which we call *universal* holiness, because it extends to the whole man, and to his whole conduct, is described in the text in a remarkable manner. The prophet foretells that holiness to the Lord shall be written on the bells or bridles —the ornaments of the horses. Now this inscription, *Holiness unto the Lord,* was originally engraved on a plate of gold, and fixed on the front of the mitre, or turban, of the high priest; and it was ordered to be upon his forehead, when he went into the holy of holies, that he might bear the iniquity of Israel, and that they might be accepted before Jehovah, Exod. xxxviii. 38. In wearing this, he was a type of Christ, our great high priest, "the holy one of God," who bore our iniquities in his

own body on the cross, and who now appears in the presence of God for us; it might also denote the personal holiness of true believers, who should be openly devoted to God, as if this inscription appeared on their foreheads.

But it is here said that this inscription shall be found on the ornaments of the horses. Were we to take it literally, it might signify that great and rich men, or travellers, shall be so far from being ashamed of religion, that they should write this motto on the trappings of their horses, as gentlemen now use their crests: that they shall glory in their profession of the gospel. But we may more properly consider the meaning to be that religion shall not be confined to sacred persons, times, and places, as this inscription originally was to the high priest; but that all real Christians, being "a holy priesthood," shall be religious at all times and in all things; that true holiness shall extend itself to the ordinary concerns of life: in a word, that Christians shall be universally holy. The proposition therefore which we shall endeavour to enforce is this—

*Universal holiness becomes the profession of the gospel.*

To be holy signifies, in scripture, to be set apart from a common or profane use to God and his service. Holiness is the renovation of our nature by the Spirit of God; it is the restoration of the image of God in our souls; whereby we are enabled to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness; and this, by virtue of our union with Christ, and by means of his gospel.

It should be understood that the holiness required by the gospel is something far superior to what is called morality. This is good in its place, and useful to society; and all the duties of morality are included in holiness. But holiness supposes the renewal of the heart. The understanding, which by nature is in gross darkness as to divine things, is

enlightened by the Spirit of God, to receive "the truth as it is Jesus." The will, which is naturally averse from good, and strongly inclined to sin, is so renewed by grace that it chooses the good and rejects the evil. The affections of the soul, which before were wild and carnal, are now brought into order and subjection, fixed with delight upon those spiritual and heavenly objects, which they once neglected and despised. "The leading powers of the soul being thus sanctified, the members of the body, which were 'instruments of unrighteousness,' become 'instruments of righteousness unto God.' The eyes, the tongue, the ears, the hands, the feet, are not only restrained from sin, but they become ready to obey God, to whom they yield themselves in order to the practice of righteousness; the tongue employs itself in the praises of God, the hands and feet in assisting our neighbour, and the other members of the body, according to their several capacities, in the practice of religion."

Hence it appears that there is a universal change made in a real Christian; which is far superior to the mere practice of morality. True holiness has always a relation to Christ and the gospel; it is by virtue of union with him, the exercise of faith in him, and diligent imitation of him, that the Christian becomes holy: and the whole of this is effected by the gracious and supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul expresses his generous wishes for his Thessalonian friends, 1 Thes. v. 23. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we perceive that God himself is the author of holiness; it must come from him; for there is nothing in our fallen nature to produce it; and it proceeds from him as he is "the God of peace;" as reconciled to us through the blood of his Son: and he is said to "sanctify us wholly"—our whole nature partakes of his sanctifying grace: and

he instances in the various powers of our nature. By the *spirit*, we may understand the *mind*, that leading faculty of man, whereby he is distinguished above other creatures; by the *soul* may be intended the inferior faculties, the passions, and affections; and by the *body*, the outward man, with its various senses, is designed. Each of these powers is already sanctified in its measure, and shall be completely so at last; so that the whole shall be found blameless at the second coming of Christ.

The principal instrument employed by the Spirit of grace in effecting this holy change, is the word of the gospel: according to our Lord's petition for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;" and according to his declaration in another case, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." When the doctrines, promises, and precepts of the gospel are understood, and applied to the heart, they cannot fail to regulate the whole of the conduct. Hence the great change observable in some of the first converts from Pagan idolatry and vice to Christianity, is ascribed to faith; "their hearts were purified by faith," Acts xv. 9; and, so far is the faith of the gospel from being injurious to the cause of holiness, that it is essentially necessary to its existence; indeed, the sum of our holy religion is, the "faith that worketh by love."

The holiness of the gospel has, for its grand objects, God and our neighbour. To love God supremely is the first concern of the believer. His glorious perfections entitle him to the highest place in the heart. Heathen moralists, and some who assume the Christian name, profess to practise virtue for its own sake; but the believer goes further, he makes it his ambition to please God, to be accepted of him, and to promote his glory in all the actions of his life.

Hence the law of God, which to others seems severe, becomes pleasant to him, and he delights in

it. That yoke, which others account heavy, he deems light, and thinks none of his commandments grievous. Hence the worship of God, instead of being burdensome to him, is his pleasure. Prayer and praise, reading and hearing the word of the Lord, are his delightful exercises. He accounts a day in God's courts better than a thousand; and would prefer the humble office of a door-keeper there, to the most splendid or profitable employments of the sinner.

That "holiness to the Lord," should be written on the doors of the church or of the closet, few will deny. We shall therefore not enlarge on the necessity of a holy temper in religious engagements. It is our design rather to shew how religion is to influence the common concerns of life; how holiness, instead of being confined to sacred things, is to be mingled with our ordinary affairs, or, according to our text, be "written on the bells of the horses."

The propriety of dwelling upon this will be sufficiently obvious to every considerate and consistent Christian, who has observed the state of things among the hearers of the gospel at large. We see little practical religion among many nominal Christians and unstable professors. Even the most exemplary have cause to lament their deficiencies. Hence it is that God is but little glorified, compared with what might be expected. The domestic peace of professing families is too often broken. Fellow Christians are too frequently grieved and stumbled. There is a notorious want of mutual affection in many religious societies, manifested by their contentions, and proneness to separate on trifling occasions. On these accounts the people of the world are confirmed in their prejudices against the doctrines of grace: they pretend that religion is a useless thing, or a mere cloak to cover bad intentions; and they even tax the doctrines of the gospel with a licentious tendency. But whence do

these evils arise? Nominal Christians are really ignorant of the nature of true religion; and too frequently, instead of using its doctrines and precepts for their sanctification, pervert its forms to an atonement for their vices; thus making the holy religion of Jesus an apology for immorality, and Christ himself "the minister of sin." Unstable professors have probably taken but a very partial view of the gospel; Arminian prejudices cut off their strength, or Antinomian notions weaken their sense of obligation; or, enthusiastically, they make their feelings the rule of action, instead of the word of God. Some more serious Christians fail through the want of exercising faith on what they do know; for the gospel does not operate like a charm on those who profess it: it has no further influence than as it is understood, trusted in, and applied to our feelings, tempers, and actions; and this particular and universal application of the principles of the gospel, is what I consider as alluded to in the text.

Let us then consider, 1. What should be the Christian's temper and views with regard to himself; and,

2. What should be his disposition and conduct towards his fellow-men.

1. Let the Christian remember that he is "the temple of the Holy Ghost;" and that the temple of the Lord must be holy. Being redeemed by the blood of Christ, he is no longer his own; his time, his talents, are not at his own disposal; they are dedicated things; they are "holiness to the Lord." Compelled by the mercies of God, he is to present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to the Lord, which is truly his reasonable service; whether he live, he lives to the Lord; or whether he die he dies to the Lord; his aim and constant endeavour should be that Christ may be glorified both by his life and death.

In subservience to this great design, he is to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and imbibe "the mind that was in him." Love is the leading grace, and will be followed by all the amiable train of Christian virtues. Humility is of essential importance, and will guard him against a thousand snares and dangers. Temperance in food, and in all other gratifications of the senses, is constantly necessary: for, if the appetites be too much indulged, the interests of the soul cannot but suffer. Patience under trying circumstances; contentment with a humble lot; submission to the rod of a heavenly father, are indispensably necessary, and are very eminent branches of gospel holiness. Crucifixion to this vain and sinful world is equally the believer's duty. He who lives in the exercise of that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, will not cleave to the dust as his portion: he who believes the scriptural representation of eternal and heavenly things, and enjoys a good hope through grace of interest in them, will have his affections raised from the low objects of sense, and fixed, in some measure, on things above, where Christ is. He will therefore discover a holy indifference to the world; its wealth, honours, splendour, decorations, and amusements will appear to him like the toys of children; and his near views of the eternal state, from which he is separated only by the thin partition of life, will convince him that neither the joys nor sorrows of the present state should much engage his heart; and thus will he conduct himself as "a stranger and a pilgrim;" thankful indeed for every comfortable accommodation, but still pressing on towards his heavenly home.

2. Holiness to the Lord is to be exemplified in the relative duties of social life. In general, the Christian has two things to regard—to do no harm, and to do much good. It is necessary that he should be "blameless and harmless, as a child of God, without rebuke." Many eyes are fixed on the professor

of the gospel: many wish and watch for his halting. Great then is the need of watchfulness, and of peculiar exactness in his whole walk, that the enemy may be disappointed, and be obliged to say of the Christian, as of Daniel, "We shall not find any occasion against this man, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." And even in the matter of religion, his care must be that "his good be not evil spoken of:" his zeal should not have a tendency to offend, but to conciliate; not to provoke, but to invite. The holy love of the gospel "suffereth long and is kind; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; behaveth not unseemly; seeketh not her own; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Are we better informed than our neighbour? are we endowed with knowledge? let us "shew out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom." The holiness of the gospel includes a pacific temper. "Following peace with all men" is connected with that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" we must rather bear injuries than resent them; rather recede from our rights, than contentiously maintain them; we are even to forgive our greatest enemies; if they hunger, to feed them: if they thirst, to give them drink: and thus heap coals of fire on their heads, and melt them down by kindness.

Active benevolence is a necessary fruit of holiness. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is the grand comprehensive rule, the sum of social duty, both in the Old and New Testament; but most strongly enforced by the example of Christ himself, who has made it the chief test of true religion: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

But there are certain situations in life, wherein persons, being mutually related to each other, are expected more particularly to manifest the holiness of the gospel. The first of these is the conjugal state.

The Creator himself appointed this union before the fall; but, we being now all fallen creatures, much grace is needful to preserve such a temper and conduct as becomes Christian husbands and wives. So many trials and crosses occur in the married state, that much mutual forbearance and forgiveness; much self-denial, prudence, and kindness, are requisite. The Scripures therefore largely inculcate the duties of the husband and the wife; and require their performance from evangelical motives, such as "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." In like manner it is commanded, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord: for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body: therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands."

The duties of parents and children should be performed in the spirit of holiness. Parents who fear the Lord themselves, will consider it their first concern to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In early life, they must be restrained from the indulgence of self-will, and taught to submit to authority; for this is the very foundation of good education. They shall be kept as much as possible from such companions and books as would pollute the imagination and inflame the passions. The Christian parent will be assiduous in his endeavours to inculcate upon the youthful mind the great things of the gospel; not only leading his charge to a place of worship where the truth is preached, but endeavouring to enforce what is heard in public by private instruction and application. The example of a pious parent is the most effectual lesson, and when this is united with fervent prayer and diligent instruction, it may be hoped that the Lord will crown the whole with success.

Children are commanded "to obey their parents, in the Lord, for this is right." The law of nature

requires it, and especially the law of God; which also adds a singular promise of prosperity to the obedient. Parents are to be honoured by submission to all their lawful commands; by attention to their exhortations; by a respectful and obliging deportment; and a steady concern for their interest and comfort, especially under the infirmities of age. And this is to be done "in the Lord," for the Lord's sake, and as a part of that "holiness to the Lord," which forms the Christian character.

Masters and servants are to perform their several duties under the influence of the same holy principle. Servants need the humility which the gospel inspires, to submit to the duties of their humble places, which undoubtedly are mortifying to the pride of corrupt nature. But as God has appointed a variety of stations, in which some must serve, and others rule, it becomes a Christian servant to acquiesce in the divine will. Accordingly the apostle exhorts servants "to be obedient to them that are their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, *as unto Christ;* not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but *as the servants of Christ,*" Eph. vi. 5, &c. Here the servants' duty is very fully expressed; and it is observable how often the apostle repeats the necessity of doing all *as to the Lord*—with a regard to do his will and glory, and this is especially incumbent on professing servants. A regard to this would effectually remove an objection frequently made, but very dishonourable to the Christian character, that masters would have any servants rather than professors. Let "holiness to the Lord" be inscribed on the servant, and it exalts his humble lot; for in the eye of God, it is not the station that ennobles, but discharging the duties of it well; therefore St. Paul adds, "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man, doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether bond or free."

Masters too are required, by the like authority,

to "do the same things to their servants, knowing that their Master also is in heaven." Those who govern, while they justly expect that their business should be done diligently and faithfully, must not be proud, imperious, or cruel; they should remember that the Lord only has made them superior; the case might have been reversed; and they should consider what treatment they would desire were the stations to be changed. They should consult their interest and comfort, should allow them leisure for retirement, opportunity to hear the word, and contribute to their spiritual good by the pious and constant observation of family worship.

The Christian *tradesman* is to remember his holy profession in the conduct of his affairs; to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. His religion is not to be confined to the church or the closet. Let holiness to the Lord be his motto in the shop, in the market, in the field. Strict honesty in all his dealings is essentially necessary; for to defraud or over-reach a neighbour; to take the advantage of his ignorance; to seek immoderate profits; rashly to contract debts without the prospect of payment; with a thousand other abominations occurring among the men of the world, are doubly abominable in the professor of the gospel. The religious tradesman is an honourable character; but the dishonest professor is of all creatures the most detestable and injurious.

Let the *wealthy Christian* write the motto of our text upon his bags of gold—"Holiness to the Lord;" let him think it as much his privilege as his duty, to consecrate the use of his riches to him who alone gave him power to get wealth; whose protection is needful for his preservation; without whose blessing it cannot be enjoyed: who gave it him for the purpose of enabling him to do good: and who will require an account of the manner in which his talents have been employed.

Let the *subject* remember his Christian character;

to "fear God," and to "honour the king," are duties coupled together by the apostle. To pray for kings and rulers, and to seek the peace of our country, are so evidently commanded in scripture, that none but an infidel can dispute the obligation. Civil magistracy is of God, and an unspeakable blessing to any country; the consistent Christian therefore will obey the laws, and be subject to the higher powers, not only for wrath (or fear of punishment) but also for conscience' sake; he will render to God the things that are God's, and to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's—to all their dues; tribute, custom, fear, and honour; and thus prove himself "a Christian patriot."

Thus have we briefly exhibited "the beauty of holiness," and attempted to shew that universal holiness becomes a profession of the gospel. This will probably be denied by few; but a cold assent to the necessity and propriety of holiness is by no means enough. Are *we* holy? It is the solemn determination of heaven, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Let us therefore not be deceived; what a man soweth he shall surely reap. A soul unsanctified can never gain admittance into heaven, the residence of a holy God, holy angels, and holy saints. Let such immediately flee to the Saviour for pardon, and implore the aid of his Spirit to make them holy.

Let believers lament the remains of unholy tempers; let them hunger and thirst after righteousness; let them live a life of faith in Christ; and be daily *looking to Jesus*—so beholding his glory as to experience an increasing conformity to his holy image, till they come at last to those pure regions where "Holiness to the Lord" is indeed universal, complete, and everlasting.

# SERMON LXIII.

2 THESS. ii. 16.

*A good hope through grace.*

THESE words are part of an affectionate prayer, offered up by the apostle of the Gentiles, in behalf of the Thessalonian Christians; and we may obtain great assistance in praying for ourselves, from such passages as this; being assured that we cannot ask amiss, if we ask in the words of the Holy Spirit himself. It is addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ, equally with God the Father; and so affords a proof, among many others, of the divinity of our Saviour, who could not otherwise hear or answer our prayers. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and* GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE, *comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.* Comfort and steadiness in religion are the blessings he prays for; and he takes encouragement, in asking for them, from the love of God already manifested, in the consolation and hope they had enjoyed—*a good hope through grace.*

Among the various and precious blessings of the gospel-salvation, this is one of the chief. The value and use of hope, in the conduct of human affairs, is well known; it is this that stimulates man to action, reconciles him to suffering, and proves the very cordial of life: but the good hope we are now treating of is as much superior to this, as heaven is superior to earth, or eternity to time: it is a hope full of

glory and immortality. May the God of hope fill us with joy and peace in believing, and render our present service the means, either of exciting or of confirming this good hope in all our souls! My design in this discourse is simply to show, that

*A good hope, through grace, is an invaluable blessing to a Christian, both in life and death.*

Now this good hope includes several important ideas, which are not always duly considered.

1. A serious, believing, habitual regard to a future state, according to the representations made of it in the sacred scriptures. No atheist, denying the being of God; no deist, rejecting the Bible, can possess this hope. We owe it all to the gracious revelation of God in the gospel, wherein life and immortality are brought to light. Without these all is vague and dark and doubtful; but, with God's word in our hand, we learn the nature of our own immortal spirits; the certainty of their existing separately from our bodies after death; the resurrection of these mortal bodies from the grave; and the complete blessedness of the saints in the kingdom of God for ever.

Giving credit to the testimony of God on these important points, the believer entertains an *habitual* regard to the eternal world, and can in some measure say with the apostle, *I look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* And this habitual respect to future things will be discovered by a serious regard to the Lord's day, to the ordinances of his house, to the scriptures of truth, to secret prayer, and to all those means of spiritual information and improvement, which are connected with this hope.

2. Preparatory to this hope there must be a

humbling conviction of our being sinners, and of our danger and helplessness as such. The law must do its office, in convincing us of our guilt and misery, and exciting in us a sincere desire to flee from the wrath to come; for, without this, it is difficult to conceive how the hope of salvation can be entertained, as it implies a deliverance from the dreadful and deserved consequences of our rebellion against God. We can therefore scarcely suppose a person to know any thing of hope, who never knew what it was to fear; for the hope of the gospel is properly opposed to the fear of the law. And this leads us to observe, that

3. This hope implies some acquaintance with the glorious gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ. It is called, (Col. i. 23.) *The hope of the gospel,* a hope derived solely from its discoveries and promises; it is a hope inseparably connected with "the faith of the gospel;" and in this it differs essentially from a hope arising from mistake, from superstition, or from the partiality of self-love.

The term, *a good hope,* seems designed to distinguish it from every kind of hope which is not good. We read in the book of Job (chap. viii. 13.) of *the hypocrite's hope;* of which it is said, that *it shall perish* and *be cut off;* and that "his trust,"—his confidence and security, *shall be as a spider's web,* it shall be swept away with the besom of destruction. In another place (Job xxvii. 8.) it is said. *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?* A hypocrite may have a hope, such as it is; and he may be a gainer by it; he may gain the applause of men; but when death comes, when God taketh away his soul, what becomes of his hope?—it fails him when he wants it most, for "the righteous hath hope in his death; but the wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Of how great consequence then is it to have a *good hope!*

Let us therefore consider on what accounts the hope of the gospel is called a *good* hope. And there are three things which entitle it to that name; for, the *object* of it is good—the *foundation* of it is good —and the *effect* of it is good.

1. The *object* of this hope is good—supremely good. All hope has something good for its object, something at least accounted good. But the object of the believer's hope is eminently, infinitely good. It is none of the gay and dazzling objects of sense; not worldly honour, nor filthy lucre, nor sensual delight; but the pure, spiritual, exalted felicities of the heavenly world; those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; those objects which the word of God reveals, and which faith discerns; for "faith is the substance (or basis) of things hoped for; faith gives credit to the testimony of God, concerning what he has prepared for them that love him; and hope expects to enjoy them in God's good time."

It doth not indeed fully appear what we shall be; the particulars of our celestial enjoyments are not disclosed, but they are "ready to be revealed in the last time." This we know, that death, dreadful as it is to nature, will be friendly to the believer, in releasing him from that body of sin and death, in which he now groans, being burdened. To be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord." And O! who can tell the blessedness of that condition! It is a great thing to be freed from all pain and disease—to have "all tears wiped away from our eyes"—to be where there is "no more death, neither sorrow nor crying:" but it is a thing unspeakably greater and more glorious to be "before the throne of God and the Lamb;" it must be infinitely delightful to be "*with Christ*"—to be "for ever with the Lord." This was St. Paul's highest idea of heaven, "to be for ever with Christ;" and our Lord himself, in his prayer for his disciples, expresses no higher notion of happiness than

this—"that they may be with me, where I am, to behold my glory." Here, in the glass of faith, we behold that glory obscurely and imperfectly; but there we shall see him "as he is"—see him "face to face"—in "our flesh we shall see God," or, see God in our flesh;—Immanuel, God with us.

How good then, how glorious is this hope! How pleasant will it be to receive perpetual additions to our stock of divine knowledge; how delightful to feel ourselves perfectly conformed to the image of God; how satisfying to be always engaged in the service of our Redeemer; how charming to enjoy the honourable society of glorious angels, and of the pure spirits of ransomed sinners; how cheering the thought of rejoining those dear and pious relations and friends who are gone before us to glory, or who shall quickly follow us thither after a short separation! O how good is that hope, which includes objects so great, so glorious as these!

2. There is another reason why this hope may be called good. The *foundation* of it is good: for without a good foundation for our hope, whatever objects it may embrace, it is so far from good, that it will make us ashamed, and issue in confusion and disappointment.

Nothing is more common than to profess a hope of going to heaven; it is so common, that, "as I hope to be saved," is a proverbial saying, even in the mouths of the most profane;—a sad sign, however, that those who use the phrase in a light and trifling manner, have no part nor lot in this matter. A good hope is a hope *through grace*. Mark well the word—"through *grace*"—a hope built on the free and sovereign favour of God, through the satisfaction of Christ—a hope that rests upon Jesus, the only sure foundation of sinners—a hope that relies on the precious promises of a covenant God. Only such a hope as this can be called "good;" and we may consider this hope *through grace*, as opposed both to our own *merit* and *demerit*.

A hope through grace is opposed to *human merit* —that fatal "stumbling-stone" both to ancient Jews and modern Christians. How often do we find poor ignorant people, when sick and dying, express their hope of going to heaven, because "they never did any harm,"—"paid every one his own,"—or "were decent and regular in going to church," &c. But thus to build our hope on ourselves is to betray an entire ignorance of the gospel, which affords no hope for a sinner, except in and through Jesus. Thus to hope in ourselves is utterly to subvert and destroy the whole plan of salvation, as St. Paul speaks, Gal. ii. 21.—"I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." There is a general disposition among all mankind to put their trust in themselves and their own works; and though there be a multitude of different religions in the world, which are contrary to each other in many things, yet they generally agree in this—to bring something of their own to God, as the ground of acceptance with him. The religion of the gospel is totally the reverse. It allows of no boasting; it teaches the best saint to call himself "an unprofitable servant;" and to say, "God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." Those, therefore, whose hope is derived from self, are anti-christian in their plan; and overthrow, as much as in them lies, the plan of the gospel—they "frustrate the grace of God"—make it void—set it aside, leave no place for it; they make Christ "to have died in vain." They do not say so with their lips, but by their false faith and false hopes; for if there be any thing in ourselves to hope in, the death of Christ, who is our hope, and who became such by dying for us, is of course, a needless thing. And this is a dreadful blasphemy! But it is a blasphemy that those who are taught of God cannot be guilty of: for they clearly see that Jesus is the only hope of a sinner; and with St. Paul, account their for-

mer gain loss; and reckon all things to be dung and dross, that they may know Christ, and be found in him. Phil. iii. 8, 9.

As this hope through grace is opposed to the *merit of works*, so it is also exalted above the *demerit of sin*. We are sinners; guilty, helpless sinners. And shall *sinners* hope for heaven? Shall vile rebels, who deserve hell, hope for glory? It is written that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven"—that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination," &c. How then can wretches so impure, so vile, so abominable in the eyes of God and in their own eyes, entertain a hope of happiness?

To all this we oppose the word *grace;* this hope remember, is *through grace*. We are "saved by grace." "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life." We are ungodly by nature; but "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We were "enemies; but when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Surely it may well be said—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" and "they that receive abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life, by Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 16, 17. Thus St. Paul opposes the hope by grace, to the awful demerit of sin, Titus iii. 3—7. "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, &c. but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us—that, being justified by *grace*, we should be made heirs, according to the *hope* of eternal life." Jesus Christ is so entirely the ground of our hope, that he takes one of his gracious names from being so; he is called, 1 Tim. i. 1. "*Our hope;*" and in Col. i. 27. "Christ in you—the hope of glory."

The good hope we are speaking of, derives much

of its stability from the promises of God in his word. Faith accepts God's bond, and hope waits for its payment. "Remember," said the holy psalmist, "*the word* unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Ps. cxix. 49. All the good things which believers expect are promised. We have "exceeding great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus." On these, the Lord causes his people to hope; it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do this, according to Rom. xv. 13. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," There is such a privilege as *abounding in hope*—having an abundant hope, a "lively hope;" "the full assurance of hope;" so that not one doubt or fear remains as to the final attainment of its object; and wherever this is, it is through the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit. This was the language of an ancient believer, 1 Chron. xvii. 23, "Therefore, now, Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant be established for ever, and *do as thou hast said;*" or as he expresses it in another place, Ps. cxix. 116. "Uphold me according to thy word: and let me not be ashamed of my hope." This is indeed a good hope—a hope that will never make us ashamed.

2. The hope we are describing is good on a third account.—*The effect of it is good.* The man who possesses it is the better as well as the happier for it. St. John says, "every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure:" —he endeavours, by divine grace, to attain all possible purity in heart and life, in conformity to the pure and holy Jesus, who will admit none but holy persons into his presence.

Gratitude to the Author of this hope, to whom he owes unspeakable obligations, constrains him to avoid the sins which he hates, and to perform the

obedience which he loves. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation," saith the psalmist, and he adds, "I have done thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 166. This hope renders the Christian active in the service of Christ, and for the good of his fellow men; for he is assured that, though there is no merit in his best performances, yet the same grace, to which he owes his good hope, will crown his labours of love with a gratuitous reward; insomuch that "a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, because he belongs to Christ, shall not be forgotten."

This good hope must be conducive to holiness, because it diminishes the temptations arising from worldly objects. These appear wonderfully great and glorious to the little mind of the natural man; he knows no greater: But what are the most splendid vanities of earth and time, to the eye of faith, which penetrates into the unseen world, and beholds objects too big for utterance; compared with which the dazzling glories of the world die like a dim taper in the blaze of noon. Thus Moses reasoned, and the court of Pharoah lost all its attractions: hence, even afflictions and reproaches, connected with "the recompense of the reward," became his deliberate choice.

But how good is the effect of this hope under the pressure of calamity! Is the Christian a soldier?—Hope is his helmet; defending his head in the day of battle, till he leave the field, more than a conqueror through the love of Jesus. Is the Christian a mariner? Hope is "the anchor of his soul, both sure and stedfast, entering into that which is within the vail;" this anchor fixes on the exalted and glorified Jesus, the advocate of believing sinners; and who is therefore able to save them to the uttermost. The hope of glory reconciles the suffering Christian to his painful lot; we therefore read, 1 Thess. i. 3. of "*the patience of hope;*" because hope makes the possessor of it patient and resigned to all the will of God, believing that "all things work together for good."

Hence the primitive disciples, who "endured a great fight of afflictions, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Why? because "they knew that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance:" —a substantial treasure prepared for them by divine grace, of which they had already the earnest, and which could never be lost or taken away from them. This good hope taught St. Paul to reckon all his sufferings "light and momentary," when poised in the scale with "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," reserved in heaven for him. With this hope, the Christian, to use the words of an elegant writer—"greatly disdains to wallow in the puddle of sin. The darts of temptation fall ineffectual to the ground. In danger he is courageous; in sorrow he is moderate; in duty he is diligent: in tribulation he is patient; and even in death he smiles."

## CONCLUSION.

We proposed, in the beginning of this discourse, to show, that *a good hope, through grace, is an invaluable blessing, both in life and death.* And who but the infidel doubts this? the *living* infidel I mean, for the dying infidel, with every other dying man, must own its unspeakable value. To obtain this, then, should be the first and chief pursuit of life. And, have *we* obtained it?

Permit me to say, that as "salvation is far from the wicked," so likewise is "the hope of salvation." What the wicked and the worldly man can call hope is nothing but *presumption.* The sensual sinner, who is living in the lusts of the flesh, can have no scriptural hope of heaven; for, only "the pure in heart shall see God." The earthly-minded sinner, whose soul cleaves to the dust, and who embraces the dunghill as his portion, cannot hope for heaven; he must be born again, or he can never see the kingdom of God. In vain the self-righteous pharisee boasts

of his hope, which is no better than the spider's web, and will not abide the day of trial. He who hopes in himself, and not in Christ, will be found like the foolish builder, whose house was erected on the yielding sand: when the rain descends and the winds blow, and the floods come, the house must fall. Not a whit better will the hope of the hypocrite prove, whose religion was merely a mask, intended to conceal his beloved sins; the all-searching eye of Christ will penetrate through the thickest disguise, and the holy judge will say, "Depart from me, I never knew thee, thou worker of iniquity." Almighty God! undeceive these mistaken and presumptuous men! deliver them from their fond delusions! destroy their false hopes; and bring them as humble penitents to thy feet, that they may obtain forgiving mercy, receive thy sanctifying Spirit, and thus acquire "a good hope through grace!"

Christian! examine thy hope. Is it a *good* hope? Is the *object* of it good? Yes; it is "being with Christ;" and what can be so good as that? Is the *foundation* of thy hope good? Look well to that. Is it Jesus alone? He is our hope. This is a sure foundation, a tried stone. He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Inquire further. Is the *effect* of thy hope good? What influence hath it on thy heart and life? Does it purify thee? Does it make thee thankful? Does it make thee active in duty—firm in temptation—patient in afflictions? These are its proper effects, and where these are found they are solid evidences of the genuine nature of religious hope.

This hope, so useful and comfortable in life, displays its full value in the article of death. "The righteous hath hope in his death." Then, this good hope is worth a thousand worlds. How many believers, in all ages, have experienced its cordial support, when flesh and heart are failing. With perfect composure they could commit their depart-

ing spirit into the faithful hands of Jesus, saying "I know whom I have believed;" and when the poor diseased body was about to become a lifeless lump of clay, they could say, each one for himself, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Christ has said, "I will raise it up at the last day." He has promised it, and he will perform it. I quit this "vile body" in hope of "the manifestation of the Son of God;" when it shall be freed from "the bondage of corruption; when Jesus shall change this vile body, and shall make it like unto his own most glorious body; for them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." In sure and certain hope of this complete and everlasting salvation, I resign both soul and body into thy faithful hands. Amen.

Such is "the good hope through grace," which a real Christian is warranted to entertain; which he glorifies God by entertaining; and which it should be his daily prayer and endeavour to entertain. To this purpose the apostle exhorts the Hebrews "to show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end"—intimating, that a full and complete hope of eternal life is attainable; and that, ordinarily, it is to be expected only by the diligent Christian, who abounds in the labours of love, showed to the name of Jesus, by ministering to his saints. Relying only on Jesus; living daily on his fulness; aiming continually at his glory; may we abound in this good hope more and more, even to the end of life; till we "*inherit the promises*"—till hope be exchanged for the full fruition of all those unspeakable glories which God hath prepared for them that love him.

# SERMON LXIV.

HEB. XII. 2.

*Looking unto Jesus.*

THIS short sentence comprises the principal business of the Christian life; for, if we are Christians indeed, "the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God;" and the proper exercise of faith is "looking to Jesus."

St. Paul introduces these words for the purpose of encouraging the Hebrew believers in their Christian course. Having, in the preceding chapter, illustrated the effects of faith by many historical examples, he proceeds to make a practical application of the whole. He would have them consider the ancient worthies, who lived and died in faith, as a numerous cloud of witnesses, spectators of their exertions in the same race; and, while thus engaged in pressing forwards towards the goal to keep their eye upon Christ—*looking to Jesus*—looking off from sin and self and the world—from every thing that would retard or dishearten, he would have them keep their eye intent upon the suffering Saviour, who is both "the author and the finisher of faith."

My design, in the present discourse, is to shew that believers in Christ are to have a constant and uniform regard to him, in the whole of their Christian walk; and that this is productive of the most solid advantages. In order to this, I shall shew that,

I. Jesus Christ and him crucified, is the principal object presented to us in the word of God.

II. A constant regard to him, as there revealed, is the first and chief business of the Christian.

III. I shall point out some of the rich advantages which the believer obtains by so doing.

I. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is the principal object presented to us in the word of God.

The whole Scripture, the Old as well as the New Testament, may be called "the word of Christ." He is the substance of the predictions, promises, and ordinances of the most ancient times. We are expressly told, that "Moses wrote of him;" that the law had "a shadow of good things to come;" and that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The prophets, priests, and kings of old, were types, or emblems of Christ, in his mediatorial offices. Their numerous offerings prefigured that one great sacrifice which he made of himself on the cross, by which he "put away sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." And the more enlightened of the Old Testament saints looked forward to the advent of Christ with faith and delight. Abraham eagerly desired to see "his day; and he saw it, and was glad." Moses prayed, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory," and was gratified with a view of it. He had such knowledge of the expected Saviour, that "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Isaiah had "a vision of the Lord of Hosts," in the temple; and the New Testament assures us that it was "the glory of Christ," which he saw. The Spirit of Christ, inspiring the prophets, "testified, beforehand, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; and our Lord, when reasoning with two of his disciples after his resurrection, referred to their writings, "and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

It is still more evident that Jesus Christ is the substance of the *gospel;* for it is "the gospel of Christ." Preaching the gospel was originally the same as "preaching Christ," or "preaching the

cross." He was not the *occasional* subject of the primitive ministry (as of some modern divines, two or three times a year, at particular festivals) but "*daily*, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach, and preach Jesus Christ." And one of these preachers declares his resolution to preach nothing else. "I determined," said he to the Corinthians, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" as if he had said, "When I came to your great and polite city, where many are fond of refined speculations, I was resolved not to change my usual method of preaching; I would appear to know, and employ myself in making known, nothing among you but Jesus as the Messiah; even that crucified person against whom so many scandals are propagated; for I know that though the preaching of the cross be foolishness to them that perish, it is the power of God to them which are saved; I, therefore, preach and glory in nothing but the cross of Christ."

As the apostles made Christ the subject of their discourses, so was he the substance of that knowledge by which the primitive Christians were distinguished. This is intimated in Ephes. iv. 20, where the apostle urges them to distinguish themselves from the unconverted Gentiles by the holiness of their behaviour, as they were so much distinguished from them by their evangelical knowledge. The heathen were sunk in sensuality and profligacy, but saith he,—"ye have not so *learned Christ*—seeing ye have heard him, and have been instructed by him, as the truth is in Jesus." This passage shews that Jesus Christ was both the *author* and the *subject* of their religious knowledge; the sum of their learning was "the truth as it is in Jesus;" their teacher was "Christ" himself, by his word and Spirit; and the genuine effect of such learning was, that holiness of character which distinguished them from all persons who were ignorant of the gospel.

Jesus Christ is so eminently the grand object presented to us in the word, that the doctrine of justification by faith in *him* is called, in Gal. iii. 1, *the truth.* St. Paul, reproving the Galatians, for their instability, says, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey *the truth,* before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" False teachers, it appears, had perverted their minds as to the great point, the justification of a sinner by Christ alone; and this he calls "the truth," because it is the leading truth of the gospel; and he blames them for departing from it, because they had been properly instructed by the apostles; the gospel had been faithfuly preached to them; "Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth," by the preaching of the gospel, in so distinct and lively a manner, that it was like the exhibition of Jesus Christ before their eyes. This scripture proves our point; it proves that Christ crucified is the prominent object which the gospel presents to our view. And if it be so, then it will naturally follow in the next place,

II. That a constant regard to him is the first and chief business of the Christian.

The doctrine of "the gospel is now made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith." This regard to Christ was described, even in the predictions of the Old Testament, by the same figurative expression as that in our text—"looking to Jesus." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," said Jehovah by the prophet Isaiah; (Isa. xlv. 22.) where Christ is plainly spoken of as "the Lord our Righteousness." And, in chapter lxv. 1, where the calling of the Gentiles is predicted, it is written, "I said, Behold me! behold me! to a nation that was not called by my name." What is this but the genuine language of the gospel, and which John, the harbinger of Christ, actually used —"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away

the sin of the world?" No doubt, the faithful among the Jews looked further than to the altar, and the victim burning upon it; they who "looked for redemption in Israel," extended their believing views to the great propitiation of the Son of God. For this reason they were commanded, whenever they prayed, to direct their eyes towards the temple at Jerusalem; because that glorious edifice was the type of the infinitely more glorious Redeemer, the true temple of the in-dwelling Deity, who is the advocate and intercessor of all his believing followers. In like manner, the refractory prophet Jonah, who, having deserted from the appointed duty of going to Nineveh, was cast into the sea and swallowed by a great fish, in the extremity of his distress uses these words — "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple"—it was the Saviour, signified by the temple, to whom he directed the eyes of his faith; he looked, and he was delivered. Thus should all distressed sinners act. This is the only safe and certain way of obtaining relief. "I will look again and again towards thy holy temple." With the encouragement afforded by the gospel, we may look into heaven itself; yea, we may "have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus." Our Saviour himself interprets the ordinance of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, to which the wounded Israelites looked for healing, as a type of himself; for, said he, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Thus he declares himself to be the object presented by the gospel, and faith in him as a looking upon that object; for he adds, "that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life," John iii. 14, 15. Looking to Jesus is the only cure for a wounded spirit. This is one of the plainest and most encouraging illustrations of the nature and effect of faith. Faith, strictly speaking, is believing the divine testimony, be-

lieving the truth, believing the gospel. The gospel presents to our minds Jesus as an all-sufficient Saviour. Faith credits the report and the promise of the gospel concerning him; and in consequence thereof, turns away from every other object of confidence, and looks to Jesus, hoping for mercy, pardon, grace, and everlasting life from him.

That looking to Jesus is the first, the chief business of a Christian, is evident from the scriptural representation of the Christian life. When the Jews asked Christ, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" or perform the most acceptable service to him? he replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." St. John, speaking of that obedience which is pleasing in his sight, (1 Eph. iii, 22, 23.) says, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." Here he makes faith and love the sum of the Christian's duty.

Several of the descriptive names and characters which Christ, for our instruction and comfort, hath assumed, confirmed this proposition. For instance, he is the "*sun* of righteousness"—the "light of the world"—"the light of life;" all persons then, but those spiritually blind, prize and rejoice in his light. He is the "*foundation*" which God hath laid in Zion; no man, taught of God, will presume to lay another: this is the tried stone—the sure corner-stone; and to them that believe it is precious: on this the believer rests, with confidence, all the weight of his eternal concerns. The same constant regard to him is implied in those places where he is represented as our *food*. He is the "bread of life!" the bread that came down from heaven; the bread that secures the everlasting life of him that partakes of it. On this sacred food the believer daily feeds; it is pleasant as the sweetest bread; and he is nourished by it unto eternal life. This plain instructive emblem, the Saviour has wisely

chosen and adopted in the sacrament of his supper; the observance of this ordinance is one of the distinguishing badges of our belonging to him; and, while the world continues, it will remain a demonstration of that truth for which we plead—that a constant regard to Jesus Christ is the principal duty of the Christian life. "Do this in remembrance of me." And this may led us in the last place,

III. To point out some of the rich advantages which the believer obtains by looking unto Jesus.

The first of these is *peace*—peace with God, and peace in the conscience. True peace comes from God the Father, through the blood of Jesus; and can only be enjoyed by looking unto him. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Those mistaken persons, who, being alarmed on account of their sins, have recourse to their own religious duties, their prayers, their fastings, their charity, and amendment of life; and hope by these to avert the wrath of God and procure his favour,—must be told, that this is not "the way of peace." It is true that duties and reformation are necessary, but not as the means or cause of peace with God: peace with him is first to be sought as procured by Christ, as proclaimed by the gospel, and as the free gift of heaven to all who truly believe it: the duties of religion will follow after, as the effect follows the cause. Nothing but the blood of Christ can "purge the conscience" from guilt, and this can effectually do it; for such is its divine efficacy, that it "cleanseth from all sin;" and the person who is enabled to put his trust in it, may say, with the holy boldness of St. Paul, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."

*Humiliation* is another advantage derived from looking to Jesus. The heart of man is naturally proud; and will never be effectually humbled, but by a believing contemplation of the greatest exam-

ple of humility that ever appeared in the world. A representation of the stupendous majesty of the Almighty God, humbled the heart of Job, and obliged him to say, "behold I am vile." A view of the starry heavens induced the Psalmist to cry, "Lord, what is man!" But a sight, by faith, of the Son of God, laying aside his glory, stooping to earth, wearing a human body, submitting to poverty, to disgrace, and to death for us, will be the most sovereign remedy against sinful pride. That humiliation, especially, which becomes us as rebellious creatures, will be best promoted by looking at a suffering Saviour, bending under the load of our guilt in the garden and on the cross. Who can make a mock at sin, that beholds the awful severity of God in punishing it in the person of his innocent Son our surety? Who can be proud, when he sees the Lord of all destitute of a place where to lay his head; enduring poverty and shame, and pouring contempt on all the enjoyments of the world, voluntarily relinquished for our sakes?

This also affords the best lesson of *patience*; and for this purpose particularly, we are exhorted in the text to look to Jesus; for, it is added, "he endured the cross, despising the shame." Never did the world behold such an example of patience as the Lamb of God, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not. If we would be Christians indeed, we must "arm ourselves with the same mind;" and, according to his direction, "deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him."

*Love* is the fulfilling of the law; and the most powerful principle of gospel holiness. But how shall this be obtained? We answer, by looking unto Jesus. "We love him because he first loved us." "He loved us, and gave himself for us." "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood." "Greater love hath no man than this,

that he lay down his life for his *friend;*" but the love of Christ was far greater, for, "when we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." Now, when this love of God our Saviour is "shed abroad in the heart;" when we have reason to conclude that "Christ loved us, and gave himself for us," it cannot but kindle a flame of grateful affection towards him. Of so great importance is true religion in the exercise of love to Christ, that St. Paul pronounces the man to be "accursed" who is destitute of it.—1 Cor. xvi. 22. For the same reason, our Lord thrice repeated to his servant Peter the pathetic question—"Lovest thou me?" Happy the man who can answer, as he did, "Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee." This was the generous principle that actuated the first disciples in their extensive labours, and supported them under their heavy trials—"the love of Christ constrained them." So far as our Christianity is genuine it will resemble theirs, and induce us to "yield ourselves to the Lord; and to act, as no longer our own, but as his; bought with a price, and under the strongest obligations "to perfect holiness in his fear."

The love of our brother is closely connected with the love of God; the former can never exist without the latter, and always accompanies it. Our gracious Lord gave this injunction to his disciples, "This is *my commandment,* that ye love one another, as I have loved you." His love, when experienced by his followers, would be imitated in their affection for each other, and for this purpose he condescended to wash their feet on the evening before his passion. In like manner we are exhorted to be "kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." Looking to Jesus, the friend of sinners, who came to seek and to save the lost, who went about doing good, and who laid down his life for his enemies, is the most effectual

means in the world of curing the selfishness of our hearts, of softening the asperity of our tempers, and of exciting compassion and benevolence in our souls, towards all our fellow men.

Looking to Jesus is the best expedient to destroy our inordinate regard to this present world. Christ was dead to it, and separate from it; and he says to his followers, "*Ye* are not of the world, even as *I* am not of the world." The gaudy vanities of earth never attracted the heart of Jesus, nor will they make much impression on us, while we are enabled to keep our eyes on him. St. Paul declares, that "by the cross of Christ he was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." The more glory we discern in our Lord, the less shall we fancy in the world. It is by looking to him that it becomes, in our esteem, a dead and worthless thing, unfit for our portion, and insufficient for our happiness. A glance of his glory, and a sense of interest in his favour, will make us indifferent alike to its smiles and its frowns; and all the glittering objects that men pursue with such extreme avidity, will appear as unworthy of our affections as the painted toys of little children.

There is one more advantage to be expected from looking to Jesus; an advantage of such magnitude, that we may challenge the universe to equal it, and that is, ability to meet death with calmness and joy. Here is a triumph peculiar to the gospel; a triumph far superior to those of kings and conquerors; a triumph over the king of terrors. Dreadful beyond description is the terror felt by many, in the anticipation of the fatal hour: and where shall we find a sufficient antidote to the fear of death, but in looking to Jesus? It formed a part of his gracious design in taking flesh and blood, that, "through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." Looking to Jesus, who has borne the whole of the

punishment due to our sins, we are no longer to consider it as *penal;* this is the *sting* of death, which he has extracted; he has rendered this fearful serpent harmless; he has "abolished death;" it is become no longer loss, but gain; no longer an enemy but a friend; hence, thousands of believers, in every age of the church, have met death with a placid smile; and, looking to Jesus, have longed to depart, to be with him.

And thus have we taken a view of what we conceive to be the principal business of the Christian life—a constant regard to Jesus, as the chief object presented to us in the holy word. Such we are persuaded is the *religion of the New Testament, the religion of Christ.* It cannot be improper for each one to ask himself—"*Is this my religion?* In my religion is Jesus 'the alpha and the omega, the first and the last?' Is he my teacher, my sacrifice, my Lord? Do I esteem him very highly for his own sake, for his love's sake, for his work's sake? Is he the rock on which I build: the refuge to which I fly; the food on which I live; the fountain in which I wash? And do I, by looking to him, obtain peace within? Does a view of him humble my soul; make me patient; excite my love; open my heart; crucify the world; conquer the fear of death?—Important inquiries! deeply interesting to my eternal safety and welfare!" Happy the man who can say, "Thus do I look unto Jesus—and these are the blessed effects."

But a little knowledge of that loose and vague profession of religion which obtains among very many, obliges us to fear that "looking to Jesus" forms little or no part of their Christianity; and *what is Christianity without Christ?* A false candour, or rather, an infidel indifference, leads many persons to say, that neither any particular sentiments nor observances in religion are of any consequence as to future salvation; and that every man

is equally right and acceptable to God, who is sincere, who leads a good life, and is useful in society.

In answer to this, I must say, that the scripture teaches a very different system; and the scripture must be our rule, unless we are disposed to renounce Christianity. We would not depreciate morality and virtue; but to make true religion consist in these, is to subvert the foundation which God has laid. To be a Christian indeed, we must learn and feel our need of Christ as a Saviour; we must be acquainted with the entire depravity of our fallen nature; we must see the necessity of a perfect righteousness; and be glad to say, "In the Lord (Jesus) have I righteousness and strength."

Alas! alas! how many live, as St. Paul expresses it, "*without Christ*"!—He is not in all their thoughts. Can they be Christians, who never think of him? or refuse to hear his voice, to read his word, to call upon his name? Can they be Christians who cherish and practise those very sins, from which he came to deliver his people? Can they be Christians who know nothing of that chief business of Christianity—looking to Jesus? It is most certain they are not, they cannot be Christians. May divine grace convince them how dangerously they are mistaken, and enable them instantly to turn their eyes towards him, who, as yet, waits to be gracious, and rejects none who apply to him for succour. Should this be neglected, how will they bear to behold him, when he shall appear in the glorious dignity of the universal Judge, amidst the awful grandeur of a blazing world. Then "every eye shall see him." They who pierced, and they who despised him, will vainly wish that rocks and mountains might crush them to atoms, and prevent the dreadful interview. O sinner! would you then behold the glorious Judge with serenity? then now behold the gracious Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

# SERMON LXV.

JOHN XVII. 24.

*Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.*

THE discourse of our blessed Saviour to his disciples, and his prayer for them just, before his passion, have ever been highly esteemed by the church of Christ. Melancthon, the Reformer, truly said, "There never was heard in heaven or earth a voice more excellent, more holy, more fruitful, more pathetic, than what we have in this prayer." Indeed it is a specimen of that gracious intercession which the Redeemer ever lives to make for us above.

There was a superstitious custom among some Christians in ancient times, which Chrysostome severely reproved, of wearing this or some other part of the gospel of St. John about their necks, as an amulet, or preservative from evil; we, however, may make a more rational and effectual use of it, by storing it in our memories, especially if the Holy Spirit condescend to write it upon our hearts. Much notice is usually taken of the dying words of a great and a good man, especially of a dear friend: these are the words of a dying Saviour, the friend of sinners; whose expressions of affection towards his disciples seemed to become stronger and stronger, as he drew nearer to the close of life. This portion of Scripture therefore deserves our most cordial regard. Let us attend to it with the greatest diligence, that we may receive present edification and comfort; and, by treasuring it up in our hearts, find it hereafter a powerful cordial (as thousands before

us have found it) on a death-bed; then may we be filled with supreme delight, in the expectation of knowing by experience what it is to be with Jesus, and to behold his glory!

In the former part of this chapter, our Lord had prayed for the *preservation*, for the *sanctification*, and for the *union*, of his people; and here follows his prayer for their *glorification*. Observe this order. The disciples had obtained that knowledge of the Father and of the Son which is connected with eternal life; ver. 3, 6, 8. He then petitions for their security against the dangers of this evil world; he proceeds to intreat their sanctification through his truth; their separation from wicked men; and here, to crown the whole, he expresses his desire that, when they leave the world, they may be "*with him*"—with him "*where he is*"—and with him there, for the purpose of "*beholding*" and sharing "*his glory*" in the heavenly state.

Our discourse on these words will consist of a few practical OBSERVATIONS:

I. *It is useful, in all our prayers, to remember that we are addressing a Father.*

Our great intercessor gives us this rule both by his precept and his example. "After this manner," said he, "pray ye—*Our Father* who art in heaven;" and in this chapter, he himself uses the endearing appellation no less than six times: the Holy Spirit is also promised to believers for the purpose of enabling them thus to pray.—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Through the blood of Jesus, a new and living way is opened to the throne of grace; so that we are warranted in coming with boldness into the presence of God our heavenly Father, who knoweth our various necessities, and whose parental affection disposes him to supply them. This is to pray "in faith:" and as one observes, "How different are the cries of a male-

factor to a judge, from the request of a child to a parent!" This kind of prayer will prevail; while "unbelief makes our prayers like a messenger deprived of his hands and feet."

II. *The singular manner in which this petition of our Lord is expressed.* "Father, *I will.*" This way of praying is peculiar to Christ, when pleading as the advocate of his people; and we never find him using this phrase at any other time. Even his most earnest prayers for himself, in the hour of extremity, were in a different style—"Nevertheless, *not my will,* but thine be done." Here, when Christ is pleading for the eternal happiness of his people; pleading on the ground of that perfect satisfaction he was about to make by his death, he claims, as it were, the happiness which he had even now virtually purchased for them. In this manner are we to conceive of his constant intercession in heaven, as founded on the covenant engagements of his Father, and his own meritorious obedience and atonement: for, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ *the righteous*—he who is the *propitiation* for our sins."—1 John ii. 1. This manner of Christ praying ("I will") should confirm our faith and increase our confidence in his intercession. The prayer that he makes cannot but be answered, for the Father "always heareth him." The legacy that Christ bequeathed cannot fail of being paid. God is faithful to fulfil all his engagements made with his Son. And though every branch of salvation is a free gift to us, yet it is a matter of justice and equity to Jesus Christ, our great surety.

III. *Believers belong to Christ.* They are his by the gift of the Father. Our Lord speaks of them several times in this chapter as *given* to him; "thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (ver. 6): and this is not to be confined to the apostles, for he says,

(ver. 20.) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." These are his peculiar people; "chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy," Eph. i. 4; they were given to him in the eternal purpose of God; in the covenant of redemption made with Christ; and they are given to him also when, by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit by the word, they are *drawn* to him, as it is expressed, John vi. 44. They are given to him "out of the world;" (ver. 6.) they are committed into his hands as the great shepherd of the sheep; are brought into his fold, fed in his pasture, and preserved by him, that they may not perish, but have everlasting life.

IV. *Jesus Christ resides in heaven, and that in behalf of his people*—"That they may be with me," saith he, "*where I am*;" and where that is none can doubt. It is remarkable that he speaks of himself as there already—"where *I am*." Indeed, in his divine nature, he was there and every where else, while speaking these words (John iii. 13.); but he speaks thus because he was just about to leave this wretched earth—"and now I am no more in the world;"—"and now I come to thee." ver. 11, 13. "I came forth from the Father—again I leave the world, and go to the Father." All this was shortly fulfilled; and the disciples saw him ascend to heaven, Acts i. 9. There "he appears in the presence of God *for us*;" he appears in the heavenly temple, the true sanctuary, as our high priest; as our great representative, to transact our affairs, to prepare places for us; and at the time appointed, "to receive us to himself; and, to present us faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy."

V. *It is the will of Christ that all his people shall be with him in heaven.* He has a perfect knowledge of every individual—His heart is set upon their happiness—He knows they cannot be completely happy on earth—and he designs their perfect bliss in heaven

He perfectly knows each individual; as the good shepherd, "he calleth his own sheep by name"—"he knows his sheep"—John x. 3, 14. Even before their conversion his eye is upon them; as he said of many in Corinth, before the gospel was preached to them: "I have much people in this city." As he said of us wretched Gentiles, as yet uncalled; "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold (that is, not of the Jewish fold); them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." When Saul of Tarsus was called by grace, he ordered his servant Ananias to visit him, directing him to the particular street, and to the very house by name where he lodged. In like manner he pointed out to Peter, who was his missionary to Cornelius, his residence with Simon, a tanner, whose house was by the sea-side.—Acts ix. 11. and x. 5. Thus, every individual of his people, however mean or obscure, is exactly known to the Saviour, whose "foundation standeth sure, having this inscription—The Lord knoweth them that are his."

The heart of Jesus is set upon the happiness of his people; he has a real, personal, intense love towards each of them, and this is the source of all he has said, done, and suffered for them. Love brought him down from the throne of glory to the stable; to the work-shop; to poverty; to contempt; to the cross; to the grave. His people are "his bride," yea, "his body;" and he loves them more than the most affectionate husband his beloved bride; yea, more than any loveth his own flesh. How sweetly did he manifest his affection to his disciples when on earth—mean, ignorant, and sometimes mistaken men as they were; nor is his love abated since his glorious exaltation; he has taken a human heart with him to heaven; he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and designs to wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Jesus Christ well knows that believers cannot be

completely happy in this present evil world. He knows this world well; for he lived in it himself; he endured the contradiction of sinners in it; and he knows that his followers must expect a similar treatment. The experience of men in all ages proves that all here is "vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit." Complete felicity here is the dream of fools or madmen. The softest nest we can find is not without a thorn. This is not our rest. We have no continuing city here. We are exposed to a thousand temptations. We are liable to a thousand misfortunes; and, whatever our outward lot may be, the inward cross, the law of sin in our members, will always embitter our condition. We are but in our embryo state, as the babe in the womb, the bird in the egg, the butterfly in the chrysalis; it is by death we burst into life; we die to live. Oh, the folly, then, of clinging to life, or shrinking from death!

IV. *Complete and unceasing happiness will be obtained when we are "with Christ."*

The heavenly state is frequently described by *negatives*—"for it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" not fully however. But we are so well acquainted with the troubles of life, that deliverance from them is highly desirable; hence, it is written, "God will wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:—and there shall be no more curse." This is much: "Blessed," on these accounts, "are the dead which die in the Lord—for they rest from their labours." But we are not to conceive of heaven only, or chiefly, as a state of exemption from misery; we have here a positive idea of the celestial world, given us by him who came from it; by him who prepares it; by him, in whose presence and glory it consists—"that they may be with me, *where I am.*"

But how shall we form a worthy idea of this happiness? Let us reflect on the happiness which the disciples of our Lord enjoyed in his company on earth; of which we may judge by their sorrow on his leaving them. Grace was poured into his lips. He spake as never man spake. Their hearts burned within them when he expounded the scriptures. How happy was Mary sitting at his feet! How blessed the penitents who heard him say—"Your sins are forgiven you!" How transported the sick, and the cripples, who possessed health, suddenly restored at his word! How grateful the relations of Lazarus and others brought back from the dead! How happy the apostles, in daily communion with him on their journeys, and at their meals, and in receiving unnumbered tokens of his condescending and captivating friendship!

Even now, though Jesus is in heaven, we who believe enjoy his spiritual presence. "The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit," is an apostolic prayer, constantly fulfilled to his people. It was what he promised—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Have we not known the pleasure of communion with him? When we have read his word, when we have heard his gospel, when we have attended his table, when we have poured out our hearts at his feet, when we have lifted up our souls in his praise, have we not been constrained to say, "It is good for us to be here?" And why good? but because Jesus himself was with us.

This is sweet; but to be with Christ must be far better. So St. Paul judged: "For me," said he, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." The apostle was a happy man, for Christ lived in him; he was a contented man, having learned in every state to be satisfied with it; and he was a singularly useful man, for his labours were most abundantly blessed. And yet, such were his views of the superior bliss

of being "present with the Lord," that he longed to be "absent from the body." What Paul wished for himself, Christ wills for all his people, "that they may be with me," saith he, "*where I am*," that is, in heaven; a state of rest, of peace, of holiness, of pleasure, of glory. We have said that we may form an idea of the happiness of being with Christ in heaven, by knowing something of Christ's being with us upon earth; and yet this affords but a very imperfect knowledge of the matter. The following reasons, however, warrant us to conclude that the presence of Christ will be infinitely satisfying and delightful. There we shall perfectly understand the dignity of his character. On earth, his disciples had a very inadequate idea of this; and sometimes, perhaps, entertained doubts and fears concerning him. We too have very imperfect conceptions of his glory: but there we shall see "the king in his beauty," and commune with him upon his throne.—Our happiness will be uninterrupted. When below, even his apostles were frequently deprived of his company. Many days was he absent from most of them, and spent whole nights in prayer alone. And, alas! how seldom do we enjoy his gracious presence, and how short the season of our felicity! But there our enjoyments of his presence will be perpetual and uninterrupted. No persecuting Pharisee, no hypocritical Judas, no tyrant lust, no ensnaring world, no tempting devil, shall deprive us of his presence for a moment.

Another important branch of our happiness will consist in being *like* our Lord. Nothing so much cements friendship as similarity of disposition. To enjoy communion with our Divine Redeemer, we must be like him; and the more we are so, the more shall we enjoy of his divine presence. In heaven we shall see him as he is, and be conformed perfectly to his image. The company of our earthly friends, whom we esteem as great, and wise, and good, is highly gratifying; but the pleasure of be-

ing with Christ must be wonderfully enhanced by the consideration of our infinite obligations to him, for his eternal, immense, and unparalleled love and goodness to us. If an unseen Christ is precious to us, we have reason to think that a sight of his lovely and glorious person will fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Lastly, this felicity will be eternal. When our Lord was upon earth, he often dropped hints of leaving them, "yet a little while, and I go to the Father"—which sometimes made them exceedingly sorrowful. But in heaven there will be no more parting, nor even the possibility of it.—"We shall be for ever with the Lord."

VII. *We observe the great end which Christ has in view, in having his people with him—"that they may behold his glory."*

To "behold" is in Scripture-language to enjoy, to participate: "Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God:" that is, he cannot participate or enjoy it. In this we may remark, that mutual happiness is the great object of our Redeemer. It was promised as the reward of his sufferings, that "he should see his seed, that he should prolong his days"—that he should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."—Isa. liii. 10, 11. So that Christ himself has a great interest in the happiness of his people, and indeed cannot himself be happy unless they are with him, and enjoy the like happiness; "I will," I desire, I delight, as the word is sometimes used, "that they may behold my glory."

Jesus Christ was infinitely glorious from all eternity. We read, (ver. 5.) of "the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was;" but for our sakes he made himself of no reputation, (*emptied himself* of all his glory) and assumed human nature in a lowly form, submitting to a life of deep humiliation, and to an ignominious death,

Yet, even before his incarnation, he was pleased, occasionally, to afford some resplendent glimpses of his glory. Abraham was indulged with a view of it, for "he saw Christ's day and was filled with ecstatic joy." Moses, the man of God, earnestly prayed, saying, "I beseech thee, to shew me thy glory!" and he was gratified: and we are expressly told that "Isaiah saw his glory," when he had a vision in the temple, of "*the Lord of hosts.*"

When our Saviour dwelt among men, and appeared in the form of a servant; when carnal eyes, dazzled with worldly splendour, saw no form nor comeliness in him; when, as a man of sorrows, he was despised and rejected of men; even then, the lustre of his glory broke through all the clouds of his humiliation; and believers, whose eyes the Lord had opened, "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The beauty of holiness displayed in his whole character, the divine light that shone in his charming instructions, the heavenly love that glowed in all his benevolent miracles, "manifested forth his glory." He appeared divinely glorious at Jordan; on the mount of transfiguration; and when rising from the tomb.

The state of our Lord, after he had finished his meritorious sufferings on earth, and ascended to heaven, became infinitely glorious. It was according to the plan of redemption that, having "suffered these things, he should enter into his glory;" and the Spirit of Christ in the ancient prophets "testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

But in what, more particularly, does this glory consist? 1. His human nature is most glorious. That sacred countenance which once was marred more than any man's—that sacred body which was bruised, broken, mangled, and crucified for us, is now brighter and more glorious than the sun; and is become the pattern of what his redeemed shall

one day be; for "he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body." This now possesses a lustre too brillant for mortal eyes: for when Jesus presented himself in his glorified state to Saul at his conversion, he was utterly overpowered with the vision; and when the beloved John beheld his glorious appearance in Patmos, "he fell at his feet as one dead."

2. Jesus Christ will appear infinitely glorious in the exercise of his office as mediator; for he continues to exercise this office in Heaven. As a *prophet*, he still teaches the whole church; by his holy word and holy Spirit. Millions of humble scholars have been sitting at his feet in all ages; and millions more will succeed, till the whole body of the elect has become wise to salvation. Inexpressibly great is the glory of Jesus as the great *High Priest* of our Christian profession. By the one sacrifice he offered on the cross, he hath made a full and complete atonement for sin; and now appears in the most holy place, in the presence of God to present the merit of his blood, and to secure its application to every one of his people. In heaven Jesus reigns, the King of Zion; he possesses universal authority; angels, men, and devils being subject to his control. The affairs of the whole universe are under his direction, and are over-ruled to the purposes of his glory.

This then is that glory of Christ, which he prays that his people may see. This is a mere glimpse of it, imperfectly caught, by a weak eye, through that glass in which the keenest believer sees but obscurely. Yet this glance of his glory may be sufficient to convince us, that to behold it face to face must make us inconceivably happy.

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From what has been said, we may learn how to form the best idea of heaven, of which we are capable in our present state. To be with Christ, and to behold his glory, is a just idea of heaven. And

this may also serve to enable us to form some judgment of our state towards God, and whether we are likely to go to heaven when we die. The serious Christian has many an anxious thought on this head; while the presumptuous sinner and the cold formalist seldom entertain a doubt. This subject may be serviceable to both. Does the former love to hear and read and think of Christ? Does he delight in beholding the glory of Jesus in the glass of his word? But, on the other hand, here is nothing to countenance the vain hope of a carnal man. He who sees no glory in Jesus here, is not in the way to behold it hereafter.

We may infer, from this prayer of Christ, *the safety of all those who believe in him.* "*I will,*" saith he, "that they may be with me." Now, does Jesus who hath almighty power, *will* this? Who then, shall prevent it? If this be his will, it shall be accomplished. His love is unchangeable; his purpose unalterable; his engagements must be fulfilled.

Finally. This subject throws a wonderful lustre over the gloom of death and the grave. Dark as they are in themselves, the Sun of Righteousness dispels the threatening clouds, and gilds the darksome scene. With that view of the matter, to which the Lord of life directs us in the text, what is death? Not a horrid monster, threatening to thrust our reluctant spirits into the prison of hell; but the gentle messenger of our Saviour, who says, "The prayer of Jesus is fulfilled: my Master has long wished for your company, and the time appointed is arrived: shut your eyes upon the fading glories of the world, and open them upon the glory of the incarnate God, your blesssed Saviour, who waits to receive you to himself, that where he is you may be also." Amen and Amen!

J. Westley and Co. 27, Ivy Lane.

# VILLAGE SERMONS;

OR, SHORT AND PLAIN

# DISCOURSES,

FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES.

BY GEORGE BURDER.

VOL. VI.

CONTAINING THIRTEEN SERMONS ON THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

A NEW EDITION.

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They shall know ME, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the LORD.—JER. xxxi. 34.

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LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY F. WESTLEY AND A. H. DAVIS,
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# PREFACE.

THE acceptance with which the former volumes of the Village Sermons were favoured by the religious public would have induced the author long ago to have added another volume to their number, had not his various and pressing engagements rendered it almost impracticable. The providence of God has, however, at length enabled him, in compliance with the many urgent applications he has received, to make the present addition: and, if his life and health are preserved, this volume will probably be followed by two others, making in the whole One Hundred and Four Sermons, a Set of Plain Discourses for every Lord's Day in two successive years.

In the choice of subjects for this volume the author determined on *The Divine Perfections*, apprehending that no branch of religious knowledge can be of greater importance, on account of its inseparable connexion with every branch of practical religion: and he was the rather inclined to this decision, because he knew of no work whatever, in which the attributes of God are treated of *plainly* and *briefly*, in a manner adapted to the improvement of that class of people for whom he professedly writes. Many authors have indeed discoursed admirably on the Perfections of the Deity, and none more admirably than the learned and judicious *Charnock*; but their writings are too profound, as well as too voluminous, for ordinary Families and Village Readers. The author has, however, not scrupled to avail himself of the aid of several excellent writers, especially of Charnock, to whom he frankly owns that he is indebted for many of the best thoughts in the following pages.

May that great and glorious Being, whom the author has endeavoured to exalt in the minds of his readers, be pleased to admit this little volume among the means which he will condescend to use, in diffusing that knowledge of himself, with which he has graciously promised the earth shall, eventually, be filled, as the waters cover the sea.

G. B.

*Camberwell,*
*December* 19, 1811.

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# SERMON LXVI.

JOHN XVII. 3.

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

THE belief of a God is the foundation of all religion. If we "come to God," for the purpose of worship, we "must believe that *he is*;" and we cannot come to him aright without knowing *what he is*, or what are the perfections which he possesses. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance to obtain a right knowledge of his character; and this is what is affirmed by "the faithful and true witness" in the words of our text. Our Lord asserts that "it is eternal life" to know the only true God—that is, it is the means, the *way*, the sure and only way, to eternal life:—that there is a *connexion* between the right knowledge of the only true God, and the attainment of eternal felicity, of which, indeed, this knowledge furnishes the true Christian with the beginning and the earnest.

Let us here consider,

1. The glorious *objects* of saving knowledge; and,
2. The *connexion* of this knowledge with eternal life.

I. The great and glorious objects of saving knowledge, mentioned in the text, are—"the only true God," and "his Son Jesus Christ."

The mind of man was formed for knowledge. He is endowed with faculties superior to those of all other creatures upon earth, which render him capable of obtaining the knowledge of God. You cannot, by any means, communicate to the most sagacious animal the least idea of the great Creator; but man was originally made in "the image" of his Maker; of which image, "knowledge" formed an essential part; and when fallen man is renewed by grace, in the image of God, he is renewed "in knowledge and true holiness."

It is an unhappy consequence of man's apostacy from God that he is not disposed to seek him. On the contrary, wicked men say to God, in their hearts and by their practice, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." In all other matters, it is natural to man to look at every object around him and to ask—What is it? What is it for? Whence does it come? Man naturally enquires into the reasons and causes of things: and, surely, the *first* cause, the great Maker of all, should be the first and chief object of enquiry. And, were we rightly disposed to seek him, we should soon find him. "He is not far from every one of us." We are surrounded with God. The heavens, the earth, the sea display his glory. The whole world is a kind of looking-glass, in which his perfections are reflected; for "the invisible things of him, even his power and godhead, are clearly seen by the things that appear." But alas! "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and the reason was, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; therefore God gave them over to a reprobate mind,"—"they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator:" they even "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible men, yea, of four-footed beasts and creeping things." The better sort of the gods which the heathen adored, were, in general, patterns of abominable vices; and it is no

wonder that their worshippers imitated them, and mingled their devotions with the most execrable deeds. Hence it was that some of their wise men, sensible of the mischief of such a system, wished that the poets, who dressed up in fine language the stories and vices of the gods, should be banished from the country, as the enemies of society.

In opposition to this wretched gang of deities, the knowledge of "the only true God" is here extolled. JEHOVAH is the only *true* God; all others are *false:* they are "vanity and lies." A principal design of divine Revelation was to maintain this great truth, —"There is ONE GOD, and there is *none other* but HE." Mark xii. 32. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Deut. vi. 4. And the Jewish nation had the honour, for many ages, of being the chief supporters of this great doctrine, amidst a world of blind idolaters. The sacred Scriptures which they possessed, and which were the treasury of this sacred truth, have been handed down to *us;* and we enjoy, in addition to them, the testimonies of the inspired apostles in the New Testament; and, above all, the testimony of the Son of God himself in our text, and in many other places. In the scriptures of truth we learn all that is necessary to be known of God. All his moral as well as his natural perfections are therein displayed. There we learn that he is ETERNAL, ALMIGHTY, OMNIPRESENT, HOLY, JUST, WISE, FAITHFUL, and GOOD. Blessed be God for these bright discoveries of his infinite perfections! It is life eternal to know thee, the only true God!

But, in our text, we find the knowledge of *Jesus Christ* is made of equal importance with the knowledge of *God;* which seems to imply that Jesus Christ is equal with God; and so indeed he is. At the first view of these words, some may think that the inferiority of our Saviour is intimated, for it is said—"This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the *only true God, and* Jesus Christ," &c. But

the title of "the *only true* God" is not intended to exclude the Son of God, but to exclude *idols*. Jehovah is the only true God, and idols are nothing: but as Jesus Christ is, in many places of the Scripture, declared to be the true God, the text cannot be understood as a denial of his deity; but it is intended to shew that it is necessary to salvation, not only to know God as a *Creator*, but also as a *Saviour*: it is as necessary to know Jesus the Mediator, by whom we come to the Father, as it is to know the Father himself; and, as we said before, thus rendering the knowledge of Christ as necessary to eternal life as the knowledge of God the Father, the text, instead of rejecting the divinity of Jesus, affords a powerful argument for it;—and here let it be observed that the three names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are not intended to explain to us the manner in which the three divine persons subsist, for that is not revealed, nor could we comprehend it if it were; but they are *office-names* of the three divine persons in the Godhead; and express the characters they sustain in the covenant of grace: and these "Three are One"—three in person and in office, but one in nature and in essence.

The true divinity of our Saviour is strongly asserted in the following scripture:—John v. 22, 23. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And in the 23d chapter of St. John, verse the 28th, we find the apostle St. Thomas, saying *to* Christ, "My Lord, and my God." St. Paul also charges the elders of Ephesus to "feed the church of God, which *he*" (that is, Christ) "purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28. Many more passages might be cited in proof of this doctrine, but we add only the following: Rom. ix. 5, "Of whom," that is, of the fathers "as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." It is necessary to know the Son of God as described by these two names—JESUS

and CHRIST, as illustrative of his character and office. The name JESUS was given him to denote the great work of salvation which he came to perform, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS," said the angel to his mother, "for he shall *save* his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21): for he came from Heaven on purpose to deliver his people from their iniquities by the sacrifice of himself, and by the power of his Spirit attending his word.

But, it may be asked by the anxious sinner, Is he appointed, and perfectly able to do this? Yes, he is; for he is CHRIST also, which name signifies *Anointed* in the Greek language, as *Messiah* does in the Hebrew. This name denotes his being fully qualified for the office, being anointed by the Holy Spirit, "full of grace and truth;" and as, in ancient times, kings, priests, and prophets were solemnly set apart to their several offices by being anointed, so Jesus Christ is divinely consecrated and authorized to perform the grand work of saving sinners; and this is further expressed by his being *Sent*—"Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." Jesus Christ, though equal with the Father as touching his divine nature, condescends, in his human nature, and in his office of Mediator, to become "the servant of the Father;" and, in regard to that character, he was sent; he did not come without authority; he came with all the authority of Heaven, to accomplish the great design, determined upon in the councils of God, before the foundation of the world. To know Christ, therefore, is as necessary to salvation as to know the Father; he is as much the object of saving knowledge and of saving faith as the Father; and he is distinguished from him, not on account of any inferiority of nature, but on account of his office-character; and it may be remarked, that the same apostle, who records the words of the text, expressly says of Christ (1 John v. 21,) "This is *the true God*, and eternal life." Our Lord himself also declares that he himself is, equally with the Father, the object of

faith (John xiv. 1.) "Ye believe in God, believe also in me"—that is, Ye have faith in God the Father, according to the discoveries of the Old Testament; have the same faith in me, his Son, the Saviour, according to the discoveries of the New Testament.

Let us now proceed, as we proposed, in the second place, to point out,

II. *The connexion between the knowledge of the Father and of his Son, and the attainment of eternal life.*

And here let us pause a moment, and consider the import of the words—"*eternal life.*" This is the glorious blessing which the Son of God came from Heaven to procure for sinners, who deserve eternal death, and were justly doomed to it by the broken law of a righteous God." "The wages of sin is *death*" —not merely the death of the body, but that which may be called the death of the soul—complete and everlasting separation from God, who is the only fountain of life and happiness; and this is called (Rev. xxi. 8) the *second* death;" this is that dreadful state which our Lord himself calls "everlasting punishment"—"everlasting fire"—"where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." But, although the wages of sin be death, "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 23.

Opposed, then, to eternal death is that eternal life of which our text speaks; the foundation of which is laid in *justification of life*, as St. Paul terms it (Rom. v. 18) which includes both an exemption from the sentence of death, and a title, through the perfect righteousness of Christ, to the complete enjoyment of happiness in heaven; for which blessed state every true Christian is prepared by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who, as an active principle of spiritual life, is compared, by our Lord, to "a well of water springing up to everlasting life." What the

glories and happiness of that state will be, it doth not yet fully appear; but we know that they will consist, partly, in that knowledge of God in Christ which is here commenced; for "we shall see him as he is," and "know even as we are known."

Now, such is the importance of divine knowledge, that our text declares "it is eternal life"—it is so connected with it that eternal life is not to be expected without it, but may be confidently hoped for as the result of it.

This will appear, if we consider that the knowledge of *ourselves*, in relation to God; conviction of sin; apprehension of danger; prayer to God for pardon; trusting in him, through Christ, for salvation; love to him; delight in him; hope in his mercy; and obedience to his will (all which are necessary in a Christian), depend upon and result from a knowledge of his true character; and, consequently, that gross ignorance of him, or great mistakes respecting him, must be extremely dangerous to the soul.

It is through the knowledge of God, as infinitely pure and holy, that we become *humble and penitent*. We see his infinite purity in the glass of his holy law; we discern our own deformity; "abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes," as pious Job did. The heathens thought God to be "altogether like unto themselves;" no wonder then that they were proud and wicked. Where ignorance of God prevails, there sin also prevails. The prophet Hosea, complaining of the people in his days, says, "There is no knowledge of God in the land;" and he ascribes to this, the prevalence of "swearing, lying, stealing, adultery, and murder." Hosea iv. 12. Where ignorance reigns, there Satan also reigns, for he is "the ruler of the darkness of this world," and wicked men are "under the power of darkness." Hence, when Jesus Christ commissioned Paul to go and preach the gospel to the heathen, it was for the purpose of "turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It was

ignorance of God that caused the Pharisee in the temple to boast; it was a true knowledge of him that humbled the Publican, and constrained him to cry,—"God be merciful to me a sinner!"

It is through the knowledge of God in Christ that we are led *to believe in him.* "They that know thy name," says the Psalmist, "will trust in thee." We dare not, in any momentous affair, especially in a matter of life and death, confide in a stranger, a person of whose ability and integrity we have no knowledge. If our property, if our health, if our life be in danger, we are anxious to know whom we trust to defend us; how much more necessary is it to know HIM to whom we commit our immortal souls; to whose advocacy we leave our cause; on whose fidelity we repose, and who is the only foundation of our hopes of eternity! Our faith will certainly bear some proportion to our knowledge; if our knowledge be very imperfect, our faith will be weak. Abraham's acquaintance with the character of God preserved him from distrust, even in the most trying circumstances; therefore, "he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he had promised (however contrary to nature) he was able to perform." Rom. iv. 20, 21. In like manner, the blessed apostle St. Paul, in the prospect of martyrdom, says, "*I know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12.

LOVE is another distinguishing disposition of the real Christian, without which all pretensions to religion are vain: but how is it possible to love any person, however amiable he may be, if we are perfectly ignorant of his character? The knowledge of God and the love of God are inseparable; for St. John saith—"He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." It is the moral excellency of any person that renders him amiable in our esteem. Wis-

dom, justice, goodness, recommend a fellow-creature to our regard; but that regard must arise from some acquaintance with the person possessing these virtues, and it is heightened by our deriving personal advantage from his possession of them. In like manner, the glorious God presents himself to our view, in his works, and especially in his gospel, as infinite in power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; and as exercising all these perfections, through the redemption that is in Christ, for us men and for our salvation; to deliver us from guilt and danger, to reinstate us in his favour and friendship, to render us happy in communion with him here, and most blessed for ever, at his own right hand, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore! Surely, such a Being must appear to us infinitely worthy of our highest veneration, our most cordial affection, our most devoted obedience. But all this depends upon the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ.

It is equally plain that the true and acceptable *worship of God* must depend on the right knowledge of him. "Ye worship ye know not what," said our Lord to the Samaritans; "we know what we worship," said he of the Jews, who derived their knowledge from the sacred Scriptures. More grossly ignorant than the Samaritans were the Greeks; for in their metropolis, in Athens, so famed for its wisdom, the apostle of the Gentiles beheld an altar with this inscription—"To the unknown God."—Unknown, alas! in Athens! unknown by the learned and sagacious Greeks!—so true it is that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Neither Egypt, nor Greece, nor Rome, with all their improvements, in science, arts, and arms, knew or worshipped the true God. But Jehovah has revealed himself to us; he has also revealed to us the way and manner in which he may and will be worshipped; and "every one who hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to him by Jesus Christ;"—for no man cometh to the Father

but by him; and, coming to him in this way, we must also worship him "in spirit and in truth;" not with bodily service merely, nor merely with the best worded petitions, but with the heart; with sincerity, reverence, fervent desires, and humble hopes; all which imply the knowledge of God.

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The great importance of the right knowledge of God having been sufficiently proved, there are some practical lessons of instruction which we may learn from the subject.

From hence we perceive in what a deplorable condition a great part of the world continues to this day. There are millions of our fellow-creatures who know not God; who, following the superstitions of their fathers, worship, if they worship at all, idols of their own making; while, for the greater part, they are addicted to the grossest vices and the most cruel practices: walking, as St. Paul expresses it, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." How devoutly is it to be wished that proper and effectual means may be taken, to dispel this dreadful darkness, and to communicate to them the saving knowledge of God!

More pitiable, because far more criminal, are those persons among ourselves, in this land of vision, who know not God; for it may truly be said of many in this country, as St. Paul said of others in his day, "Some have not the knowledge of God! I speak this to your shame!" How many are wilfully and contendedly ignorant. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Unhappy creatures! their ignorance is their sin; yet their ignorance hides from them both their sin and their danger. "My people," said the Lord, concerning Israel, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge;" and the same may be said of many who are called his people now; but let such persons know this, that

"the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire;" and when he comes he will "take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. Let none then who live in this happy country, think that they shall be excused on account of their ignorance; for all have opportunity to read or hear the gospel; and to neglect the proper means of obtaining divine knowledge is to incur the displeasure of God; for "this is the condemnation," said the Saviour himself, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John iii. 19. O that such persons may resolve, by the grace of God, from this moment, earnestly to apply their hearts to wisdom; and, while they use the means, pray fervently to "the Father of lights" to make them wise to salvation!

Others among us have the greatest cause for thankfulness. Has he, who, in the first creation, "commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" O reflect on the greatness of the blessing! Christ congratulated his disciples on this account, saying, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see;" and he offered up praises to his heavenly Father, that he had revealed to babes the great truths of the gospel, which the wise and the prudent had rejected. Let it be your constant care to let "your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father, who is in Heaven." If you have indeed been "taught of God," prove it, by "putting off the old man of sin," and by being "renewed in the spirit of your mind." For the true knowledge of God is always practical. We deceive ourselves if we pretend to know him, and yet persist in sin. The apostle John tells us, that "he who saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not

in him." 1 John ii. 4. On the contrary, he who truly knows God, will love, and serve, and obey him. Thus the obedience of the young king Josiah is mentioned, by the Lord himself, as the evidence of the right knowledge of him;—"He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him; was not this to know me? saith the Lord." Jer. xxii. 16. A right knowledge of Christ produces an imitation of him; "we behold his glory and are changed into the same image;" we behold the glory of his holiness, meekness, humility, and self-denial; and we study to be holy, and meek, and humble, and self-denied like him. This is the true knowledge of God: and if you possess this, in any measure, you have cause to be thankful. Then, indeed, may you glory in this—not that you are rich or mighty in the world, but that you know the Lord; that you are going on to know him better; and that the happy day may be expected when, in the heavenly world, you shall "know even as you are known;" not see any longer "through a glass darkly, but face to face;" and learn, by blessed experience, the full meaning of the text—"This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."—To Him, with the Holy Spirit, the one God of our salvation, be ascribed everlasting praises! Amen.

# SERMON LXVII.

GENESIS XVII. 1.

*I am the Almighty God.*

IN attempting to display the divine perfections, it is natural to begin with that which first strikes the mind of man when he thinks of a God. Whoever believes that there is a God, must believe that he is a great and powerful being. When St. Paul says, that "the invisible things of God" are perceived by the works of his hands, he mentions particularly, "his eternal power," Rom. i. 20. We cannot conceive of a God without power; nor can we conceive rightly of Jehovah but as a God of *infinite* power; the *Almighty* God, as he is called in our text. By this name he revealed himself to Abraham, when he appeared to him to confirm the promise of a very numerous posterity; a thing that seemed unlikely, if human appearances only had been consulted: but to encourage his faith in the promise, he says, "I am the Almighty God." This was enough; Abraham was satisfied. He believed: he waited; and the promise was fulfilled. It will also greatly assist our faith, and promote our devotion, if we receive and retain a solemn conviction that

GOD IS A BEING POSSESSED OF INFINITE POWER.

Let us trace the evidences of this truth,

1. In the original production of all creatures;
2. In the preservation and government of all creatures; and,
3. In the redemption of sinful man.

I. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear." Heb. xi. 3. They were not merely *formed*, they were *created*—they were made out of nothing, the matter of which they were formed was created; for "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" (Gen. i. 1.) and these two words, "the heaven and the earth," include all the countless myriads of creatures and things which fill the universe, and far exceed the ken of mortals. God alone can create. Men can build houses and ships, but they must have materials to build them with; but when God made the world, he found no materials to work with; he created the materials themselves, he made the matter of the heaven and the earth; he then *framed*, or curiously and perfectly wrought, that created matter into millions of beautiful forms; and in the space of six days "the heavens and the earth were *finished*." Gen. ii. 1. All God's works are *finished* works; they will bear the closest inspection; and, when most examined, will be most admired; they are the work of the Almighty God.

It is thus that he is distinguished from all false and pretended gods. "The idols of the heathen are vanity and lies, but the Lord made the heavens." — "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth, and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none else." Isa. xlv. 18. "The gods that have not made the heaven and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth; they are vanity and the work of errors." Jer. x. 11.

The limits of a short sermon will not admit of a

large description of the creation. We can refer but to few particulars. Observe the power of God in the *greatness* of some bodies, and in the *smallness* of others. The earth, which we inhabit, is eight thousand miles in diameter (or across); but what is this to the body of the sun, which is said to be a million of times larger than the earth, and ninety millions of miles distant from it! Some of the fixed stars are, perhaps, suns of other systems, and at such an immense distance, that it is supposed their light would be many thousands of years in reaching us, were it to travel with the velocity (or quickness) of a cannon ball.

The *smallness* of many creatures is as surprising as the greatness of others. There are living creatures so very small, that many thousands of them may be contained in the bulk of a single drop of water. These all proclaim, with a loud voice, the Almighty power of God; they constrain us to cry out, in the words of the prophet, "Ah, Lord God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Jer. x. 17. They oblige us also to exclaim, in the language of the Psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" Psal. viii. 4. But this condescension of the Almighty God will perhaps appear more wonderful, when we consider, in the second place,

II. The power of God, as it is displayed in the preservation and government of his creatures.

The whole system is preserved in its beautiful order by the same Almighty hand which gave it being. "He upholds all things by the word of his power." The planets, those vast bodies, revolve in their appointed circuits, with the most minute exactness, as is evident from the nicety with which eclipses and other wonders of the heavens are calculated. The earth, for instance, performs its annual revolution in three hundred and sixty-five days,

five hours, and forty-nine minutes, never varying its course a single inch, nor its period a single moment. The moon also faithfully attends the earth, and sweetly lessens the gloom of our tedious nights. The various seasons succeed each other in their appointed order; and, according to the divine promise, "summer and winter, seed-time and harvest," continue to this day. The great and wide sea, whose billows roar and threaten to overwhelm the earth, is kept by the power of its Maker within its proper limits! and "shall we not fear him who has placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it?—and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail!—though they roar, yet can they not pass over it!" Jer. v. 22.

Mark the display of the same Almighty power in making constant provision for the vast family of the universe. All the innumerable tribes of beings which inhabit the air, the earth, and the water, "these all wait upon God, that he may give them their food in due season; that which he giveth them, they gather; he openeth his hand, they are filled with good." Psal. civ. 27.

The continuance, from age to age, of the various orders of animals, beasts, birds, fishes, insects, and all the multitudes of trees, plants, and flowers, must be ascribed to the same almighty power. How remarkable is the uniform proportion of males and females in the human race, and how kind the providence which multiplies the creatures useful to man, while lions and tigers, whales and sharks, are comparatively few!

The *moral* government of God is still more wonderful. To his power in restraining evil spirits we owe much of our safety and comfort. We are more sensible of his power in restraining wicked men. Bad as the world is, it would be infinitely worse, if God did not withhold bad men from their purposes; but all hearts are in his hand. He that re-

strains the raging waves of the sea, subdues also the madness of the people. "The floods have lifted up their voice: the floods lift up their waves; but the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Psal. xciii. 3, 4.

The power of God was in ancient times most marvellously displayed in the miracles, which were wrought for wise and great purposes. He who gave laws to nature, can suspend or reverse them if he thinks fit. Once he permitted the waters to cover the whole earth, and drown its guilty inhabitants: again, he restrained the floods, and caused them to retire. By a train of most wonderful works he rescued Israel from the yoke of Egypt, formed a path for them through the Red Sea, and sustained them for forty years in the wilderness. When he commands, waters shall not drown, fire shall not consume, lions shall not devour. The miracles of Christ exceeded all others, for he was Power itself in a human form. "The blind received their sight, and the lame walked; the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard; the dead were raised up, and to the poor the gospel was preached." Matt. xi. 5. Now in that gospel so confirmed, we shall find the grandest displays of divine power, and those in which we are most concerned. We proceed then, in the third place, to consider,

III. The power of God as it shines in the redemption of sinful men by Jesus Christ.

Observe this power in the person of the great Redeemer. The production of his human nature, in the womb of the Virgin, is ascribed (Luke i. 45.) "to the power of the Highest," that is, of the Holy Spirit; in consequence of which, though he "was made of a woman," and made "in the likeness of sinful flesh," his nature was without sin, and "that holy thing" which was born, was the pure and immaculate Son of God. Wonderful was the power

which preserved him from his cruel and implacable enemies, for he constantly endured the opposition of men and devils; nor could any of his adversaries prevail against him, till "his hour was come;" that appointed hour, when, "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," with "wicked hands" they crucified "the Lord of Glory." Nor could death itself detain "the Lord of life:" he burst asunder the bars of the grave, and by his resurrection, more than by all that went before, "he was declared to be the Son of God with power"

When we consider the first planting of our holy religion in the world, by instruments so feeble, and notwithstanding obstacles so great, we shall see with what propriety the gospel is said to be "the power of God unto salvation." The apostles were plain men, who had been under the instruction of Christ for three or four years, and were well qualified to teach mankind; but they had not the sanction of learning, the eloquence of orators, nor the authority of the magistrate. They had to encounter the deeply rooted prejudices of the Jews; the superstition, idolatry, hatred, and vices of the heathen; the customs of the world, the laws of nations, and the interests of priests, aided by all the malice, cunning, and cruelty of the great destroyer, whose kingdom and influence among men the gospel was intended to subvert. But they went forth in the name of Jesus, filled with his love, inspired by his Spirit, animated by his promise, and the weapons of their warfare, altogether spiritual, became "mighty, through God, to destroy the strongest holds of the devil;" even in Jerusalem, where Christ was crucified, many thousands were converted to him. In Cesarea, in Antioch, in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Alexandria, and even in Rome, Christian churches were formed; the altars of the idols were abandoned; and the gospel triumphed over millions of souls!

But it concerns us most of all to trace the effects of divine power in the application of the gospel to the heart, without which, its publication to the world, and its preservation to this day, will not avail to our personal salvation.

The gospel is designed to produce a great inward change. The corruption of our nature renders this change absolutely necessary; and it is a change so considerable, as to be called in Scripture "a new creation:" this, of course, can be effected only by the power of God, and, therefore, true converts are said to be made "willing in the day of his power." Ps. cx. 3. The mind of man, in his natural state, is in darkness, unacquainted with the way of salvation through faith in Christ, and frequently contentedly ignorant, yea, wilfully ignorant; for there is an unhappy aversion to the truth, a strong prejudice against it, insomuch that many persons "love darkness rather than light." There is a strange dislike to private religion—the reading of the Bible and prayer: while in some persons there is a strong attachment to vanity, to gaiety, to amusements; in others, vicious habits are formed, and wilful sins indulged. Some are profane, and venture without fear of the threatened punishment, to take the holy name of God in vain, perhaps to utter curses on themselves or others. Some, in open defiance of divine authority, instead of remembering the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, turn their backs on their Maker, and prove that they love him not, by preferring their pleasures to his service and worship, to the utter neglect of their souls and salvation. Others launch out still further into the ocean of vice, and plunge themselves into guilty pleasures and filthy vices, to which God has annexed everlasting punishment. The multitude among us, it may be feared, forget God; they live without God in the world; and their hearts are as far from him as those of the Pagans themselves.

Taking this view of things, we are ready to say, as in the prophet, "Can these dry bones live?" Can

these careless souls become diligent disciples of Christ? Can their love of vanity be cured? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Can the habits of profaneness, of drunkenness, of uncleanness, be subdued? Can these vain and worldly people be so changed, that they may love what once they hated, and hate what once they loved? Can they become pure, pious, spiritual, humble, zealous followers of the Lamb? Can they be induced to resist the claims of self-interest, and endure the scornful smile, the harsh insults, and the cruel mockings of gay companions and displeased relations?—Yes. All this has been done, and may be done again. What! if it be impossible with men? All things are possible with God. "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." 2 Cor. iv. 6. And the gospel, attended by the energy of the Holy Spirit, "casts down imaginations (or reasonings) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 5.

"But," it may be asked by a penitent sinner, "can an offender so guilty and vile be pardoned, and received into the divine favour? Can crimes like mine be blotted out, and remembered no more?" Yes. The Son of man, when on earth had power to forgive sins: nor has he less power in heaven: he has power to give eternal life to all who are given to him; and as he never rejected a penitent sinner when he lived among men, neither will he now; for "he is exalted to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins;" and he has graciously said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

One exertion more of divine power let us contemplate. When Moses saw a bush on fire, and yet it was not consumed, he turned aside to behold it with admiration. In that burning bush he beheld the emblem of Israel afflicted in Egypt, yet not de-

stroyed; and we may perceive in it an emblem of a true Christian "kept by the power of God through faith to salvation." And what but the power of God is sufficient for this purpose? If you consider what a dangerous world we live in, where iniquity abounds, where prosperity presents a thousand snares, and adversity a thousand temptations; when you remember that Satan, "like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour:" and above all, when you recollect that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," you will rejoice to think that the great and good Shepherd of the flock hath said of his sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." In that almighty hand the believer is safe; "he is able to keep us from falling;" to "keep what we have committed to his care;" to support us under all the trials of life;" to comfort our souls in the article of death; and to complete the whole redemption at the last day—when "he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Phil. iii. 21.

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What then shall we say to these things? What use shall we make of our meditations on the Almighty power of God? Let him be adored; let him be feared; let him be trusted.

*Let him be adored.* He, and he alone, is the proper object of religious worship. Observe and admire his power wherever you see it; and where can you look without seeing it? Wisdom and power among men command our respect; we reverence the wise and the mighty; and shall we not reverence and adore *Him*, who is infinite in wisdom, and almighty in power? We admire the princes of this world, mortal as they are, who command numerous armies, govern extensive empires, conquer power-

ful enemies, and preserve their own people in peace; should we not then admire and adore the Lord of Hosts, who rules among the armies of heaven, and over the inhabitants of the earth; whose wisdom none can fathom, whose power none can resist? Yes, "Him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice." Adore and praise him, and say, with the heavenly worshippers who bow before his throne and cast their crowns at his feet, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." Rev. iv. 11.

*Let this Almighty God be feared.* Fear not man, who can do nothing but as permitted. "Fear not man," said our Saviour, "but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear. Fear him, who, after he hath killed the body, can cast both body and soul into hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him." O the folly and madness that possesses the hearts of men, who dare rebel against him, break his commandments, abuse his goodness, defy his anger, and neglect his salvation! The almighty power of God renders the thoughts of his being our enemy insupportably terrible. He who has "revealed his wrath against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men," is able at any time, and by any means, to execute his threatenings; for "he is strong that executeth his word." If he is pleased to give commission to thunders and lightnings, to storms and tempests, to earthquakes or plagues, floods and fires, to destroy his enemies, who can "stay his hand," or restrain his power? Ah! "who ever hardened his heart against him and prospered?" Consider this, then, ye that forget God, lest he tear you to pieces, and there be none to deliver." "Set not the briars and thorns against him in battle, lest he go through them, and burn them together; but take hold of his strength, and make peace with him." Say, poor sinner, "Can thine heart endure, and thine hands be strong, when he shall deal with thee?" or, "Is

there any that can deliver out of his hand?" Be wise now therefore; be instructed. Submit at once; and seek his pardoning mercy through Christ, "lest you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." But, finally,

"*Blessed are they that put their trust in him.*"

Yes; "trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." What cannot he do, who is almighty? "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Imitate the faith of Abraham, who could confide in the power of God, when probabilities were all against him, "being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Thus the noble confessors in Daniel's time were courageous for Jehovah, being assured that the God whom they served was able to preserve them, even in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Our faith should bear some proportion to the object of it. How inconsistent is a strong God and weak faith! When our Saviour was about to exert his miraculous power in healing, he proposed this question, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" So should we ask ourselves when we desire any thing from God, Do I believe that God is able to fulfil my request? Faith will be feeble, and prayer will be lifeless, if the power of God be forgotten; and be encouraged, by reflecting that the exercise of Almighty power is entrusted to the hands of Jesus Christ. He has "all power in heaven and in earth; he is therefore "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him." His blood is so efficacious, that it can cleanse from the utmost possible degree of guilt; his grace is so powerful that it can rescue from the utmost power of sin; he can save to the utmost extent of our wishes and capacities, to the utmost period of life, yea, he can and will continue to bless his people to the most distant ages of eternity. Be not, therefore, afraid to trust him. Venture on him—he is the Rock of Ages. Cast your souls, your sins, your burdens on the

Saviour. "Trust in him at all times, ye people." "What time you are afraid, trust in him." "Seek unto God and to God commit your cause; for he doeth great things, and unsearchable; marvellous things without number." Job v. 8, 9. "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, make known your requests unto him," encouraged by this declaration, "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end! Amen."

# SERMON LXVIII.

ROMANS XVI. 27.

*To God, only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ, Amen.*

WITH these words the apostle Paul concludes his most admirable and useful Epistle to the Romans. Having expressed his good-will towards the Christians then living in the city of Rome, he prays for the establishment of the gospel among them; for which gospel he ascribes glory to that infinitely wise God, who is the Author of the gospel, through Jesus Christ his Son, the great preacher and the great subject of it. "To God, *only wise*, be glory."

Our present business is to explain and improve the following truth:

## GOD IS A BEING POSSESSED OF INFINITE WISDOM.

Wisdom, in man, is that attainment of his mind whereby he is enabled to regulate all his actions in the best manner; to choose the best object, and to pursue it by the best means. It is the application of good knowledge to good purposes: it is acting according to a correct judgment; for there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge resides in the understanding; but wisdom relates to practice. Knowledge is therefore the foundation of wisdom. A man may have knowledge without wisdom,

but he cannot have wisdom without knowledge, for wisdom is the right use of knowledge.

But knowledge and wisdom in the blessed God are inseparable. St. Paul puts them together, when he cries — "O the depth of the riches both of the *wisdom and knowledge* of God!" Rom. xi. 33. His knowledge is infinite. "Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite." Psalm cxlvii. 5. God knows *himself*, and he *only* knows himself perfectly, for he only is infinite. He also knows all other things, whether they be past, or present, or to come. His judgment of all things is perfectly correct, and this regulates all his operations. He directs all things to their proper end, the end for which he gave them being; and this is his own glory: for, as he is the most excellent Being, nothing can be so excellent an end as his own glory; and his wisdom so directs all beings and all occurrences, that this end shall be fully and finally accomplished, "*For* OF HIM, *and* THROUGH HIM, *and* TO HIM, *are all things: to whom be glory for ever.* Amen." Rom. xi. 36.

In our text God is termed "ONLY WISE;" and in another place he is called "*The only wise God;*" for God alone is perfectly, universally, and constantly wise. In very ancient times, men distinguished by superior learning and knowledge were called *Sophoi*, that is, *wise;* but Pythagoras and Socrates, two of the most eminent of them, thought this too high a title to be given to any but God; and from that time they were known by the more modest name of *lovers of wisdom (Philo-Sophoi)* or Philosophers. Wisdom is indeed "The divine Royalty." Strictly speaking, it belongs to God alone. As "there is none *good* but one, that is, God;" so there is none *wise* but him. Men have often boasted of their wisdom; but "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;" and "he knoweth the reasonings of men that they are vain," especially when they are opposed to his gospel;

and on the other hand, "the foolishness of God," that is, the gospel of Christ, profanely so called by some, is "wiser than men"—far wiser than any of the schemes devised by the *wit* of man. 1 Cor. i. 25, and iii. 19.

But we need not confirm this truth by referring to many other scripture proofs, for it is what every man must admit; we shall rather shew, in a few select instances, wherein the wisdom of God is displayed.

I. It is natural, in the first place, to refer to *the works of God* which our eyes behold; and the slightest observation of their nature and design will constrain us to say, "in wisdom hast thou made them all!"

Observe their *variety*, and say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how *manifold* are thy works!" From the same original matter the infinitely wise God has produced a vast variety of creatures and things. "Let the earth," said he, "bring forth grass, the herb, and the fruit-tree; and it was so. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowls that may fly above the earth: let the earth bring forth cattle, beasts, and creeping things. And God said, Let us make man; and God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." Gen. i. 31. How different are the forms, the qualities, the colours, and the uses of the creatures of God! How numerous are the heavenly bodies; the inhabitants of the earth, of the air, and of the water: they all differ in their structure; but they all display the wonderful wisdom of their great Creator: a wisdom we cannot comprehend, "for no man can find out the work that God maketh, from the beginning to the end." Eccles. iii. 11.

The remarkable *fitness* of every thing which God has made, for its intended purpose, is another proof of his wisdom. It is impossible not to see the most

evident marks of design and contrivance in the works of God. Every thing has its proper use, and every thing is perfectly adapted to that use. He hath formed the sun to give us light by day, and the moon by night; "he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth." That every tree and plant should produce its distinct and proper seed, to perpetuate the same species for future years, is an admirable provision of divine wisdom. "The sea also is his"—"the great and wide sea, wherein are creatures innumerable." "There go the ships," which render the sea the medium of union among the most distant nations, although it seems to separate one country from another; for, by navigation and commerce, the productions of different countries become a common stock, and wonderfully increase the comforts of man, while it employs the skill and industry of multitudes, facilitates friendly intercourse, and extends knowledge, especially that best kind of knowledge, the gospel of Christ, which is, "the wisdom of God."

The changing seasons of the year are a wise and gracious appointment of heaven, and are far more grateful than a constant sameness. The frost of winter destroys noxious insects and weeds, braces the human body, and prepares the soil for a new crop. The returning spring renews the face of the earth, and inspires the heart of man with cheerfulness and pleasure. The warmth of summer ripens the succeeding productions of the garden and the field; and the autumn crowns the year with fruit and corn to reward the care and toil of the husbandman. The succession of night and day is pleasant and useful to man; he welcomes the day as the proper season of labour, and the night is no less welcome as the season of rest. All *night* would be intolerable, and all *day* would be extremely inconvenient. "The day is thine, the

night also is thine; thou hast prepared the light and the sun; thou hast set all the borders of the earth; thou hast made summer and winter." Psalm lxxiv. 16, 17.

The bodies of animals and all other living creatures display the wisdom of God in a most wonderful manner. Some are formed to live in the water, an element that would destroy others. Birds are furnished with wings to soar aloft in the air; some animals live beneath the surface of the ground; but they all have organs suited to their destination; proper food is provided for their support, and they have sagacity to find it, and stomachs fit to digest it. All this proceedeth from him who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working.

The human frame is itself a world of wonders. Consider some of its parts. The bones are so firm that they support the whole body, yet so flexible that we can perform a vast variety of motions. The muscles, which are more than four hundred in number, have all their particular uses, yet never interfere with each other. The eye an organ of such astonishing contrivance, that anatomists have called it "a sure cure for Atheism." The ear is no less wonderfully adapted to its office; its mechanism is extremely simple, but the variety of its effects is remarkably great. The process of digestion is surprising; the power of the stomach and other organs to turn so many different substances into chyle and blood, and thus to nourish life for many years, is truly amazing. The circulation of the blood is equally admirable. The heart has the power of forcing the blood into the arteries, and receiving it back from the veins, after it has visited the most distant and minute parts of the system; for this purpose it contracts and dilates its muscles, four thousand times each hour, making nearly one hundred thousand strokes every twenty-four hours; and continuing to do this, without weariness or disorder, for seventy or eighty years together.

This wonderful machine is, generally speaking, kept in perfect order; for health requires the exact performance of every function. Little do we consider how much must go to produce the ease we generally enjoy. We need not wonder if at any time we are unwell; but, knowing the complicated machine of the body, we may wonder at a single hour's comfort and activity. Well may each of us say with the prophet, "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."

2. The wisdom of God is no less apparent in the work of Providence than in that of Creation. It requires the same skill to govern the world as to make it. The order and harmony of the universe can be ascribed only to the constant influence of the eternal mind; without which neither an empire rises, nor a sparrow falls. The world is like a vast machine, in which there are many millions of movements, some of which, to our mistaken view, seem to contradict each other: but, by the wisdom of the great Artificer, they all concur to accomplish his design, and to promote his glory.

But it is to MAN, and to man *as a fallen creature*, that we should chiefly direct our attention. How remarkable is the wisdom of God in conferring upon men those different abilities and inclinations, which tend to the general welfare of society! How wonderful is the restraint which he lays upon the wicked, without which, their ungoverned appetites, and ferocious tempers, would deluge the earth with misery and blood! but "he stilleth the noise of the waves, and the raging of the people."

The wisdom of God is frequently conspicuous in effecting the most grand and glorious designs by weak and feeble means, and even by the bad dispositions of men.

The envy and cruelty of Joseph's brethren led the way to his advancement in Egypt, as did also the wickedness of Potiphar's wife. God turned the counsel of Ahitophel into foolishness; so that what was proposed for the destruction of David became the means of his safety. The luxury of some of the rich provides labour and food for the poor; and the worst of human actions give occasion to the enactment of the most excellent laws. Persecution itself, the vilest effort of human depravity, tends to the promotion of the gospel, and "the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the church." Thus, even "the wrath of man is made to praise him, and the remainder thereof he is pleased to restrain."

3. But the wisdom of God is most of all illustrated in the grand affair of human REDEMPTION; other discoveries of it, however excellent, are as the dawning light of the morning, compared with that of the meridian sun, shining in its brightest splendour.

To restrain or lessen human evils, and render them tolerable, is no small effort of the wisdom of man; but the wisdom of God has brought out of the greatest possible evil, the greatest possible good. He has made the apostacy of angels, the malice of devils, and the rebellion of man, the occasion of exhibiting all his glorious perfections, and especially his wisdom, to the utmost advantage. Nothing in all the world can be so evil, so detestable as sin: nothing so hurtful and horrible as its effects: and yet it has given occasion for the manifestation of divine wisdom, holiness, justice, patience, and mercy, beyond what we can conceive would have been possible, had not sin entered into the world.

Here, then, is the "hidden wisdom of God;" wisdom which the light of nature could never have discovered; and which our feeble intellect so imperfectly comprehends, that it still remains "the

wisdom of God in a mystery." 1 Tim. i. 17; and 1 Cor. ii. 7. It is the "manifold wisdom of God" —displayed, not in a single act, but in a variety of counsels; the union of the most excellent ends and of the most excellent means. "He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence:" —wisdom in the contrivance, and prudence in the execution of the plan.

Nothing less than wisdom truly divine could have found out an expedient whereby "Mercy and Truth" (apparently contrary to each other) "should meet together; Righteousness and Peace," equally hostile to each other, "should meet and embrace." The claims of justice and of mercy are so opposite, that human wisdom could never have reconciled them. We may suppose Justice to plead in the following manner:—"Dread Majesty of Heaven, I arraign, before thy awful tribunal, the rebel Man. Made in thy image, richly favoured by thy blessings, placed under a law, easy, righteous, and reasonable,—bound by ten thousand ties to love and serve thee, he has listened to the tempter, wilfully transgressed thy commandments, dishonoured thy government, and filled thy whole creation with folly, and sin, and woe. I demand his life. It is forfeited. He well deserves to die: and die he *must;* or what becomes of thy truth, which declared he *should* die? What becomes of thy holiness, should he not die? What world of thine will hereafter believe that thou art holy, or just, or true? I demand therefore that he die."

But Mercy, smiling, appears. "I too," saith she, "have my plea to offer. It is true man hath sinned, and deserves to die. But is there no room for the exercise of pity and compassion? Justice is already displayed in the punishment of fallen angels; let that suffice. Permit Mercy also to be exhibited to the universe. Now there is an admirable opportunity for it, for without misery there can be no mercy. Shew pity, then, to miserable man. Shall devils for

ever triumph? Shall they boast that, by one daring stroke, they have spoiled the six days' labour of a God; and this fair globe, adorned with a profusion of thy choicest gifts, become a mere wilderness of woe, a charnel-house of destruction, and nothing more than a porch of hell? O listen to Mercy, and let the rebel sinner live!"

Now who can adjust these jarring claims? If one be gratified, it must be at the expense of the other: If man must perish, what becomes of Mercy? If man be pardoned, what becomes of Justice?

Only the wisdom of God can devise a satisfactory expedient. The wisdom of God saith, "I will satisfy you both. The pleas of Justice shall be satisfied in the punishment of sin; and the pleas of Mercy shall be satisfied in the pardon of sin. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment; nor Mercy for want of compassion. I will provide a sacrifice which shall satisfy Justice; and the virtue of that sacrifice shall gratify Mercy. Justice shall have punishment to accept, and Mercy shall have pardon to bestow. The rights of both shall be secured; and the demands of both shall amicably accord in punishment and pardon, by transferring the punishment of the sinner to his Surety. Justice shall exact a recompence from his blood, while life and salvation shall be granted by Mercy to the sinner, without the expense of one drop of his own." Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God! The riches of grace are entwined with the terrors of wrath. God is righteous without being cruel, and merciful without being unjust. His righteousness inviolate, and the world recovered.*

How marvellous is the wisdom of God in the provision of a SAVIOUR in the person of his SON, Jesus Christ! Who so proper to restore the world as he who made it? Who so qualified to renew the divine

* These thoughts, with many others in the course of these Sermons, are borrowed from the admirable CHARNOCK on the Attributes of God. See particularly vol. i. page 383, &c.

image, as he who first impressed it? Who is so fit to intercede with God, as his dearly beloved Son? Who so proper to redeem the forfeited inheritance as the "Heir of all things?"

The union of the two natures, human and divine, in the person of Christ, appears to be admirably adapted to the great purpose designed. He is "Immanuel—God with us;" he was therefore qualified, as an umpire, to lay his hands upon both parties. By the one nature, he was fitted for "things pertaining to God;" by the other, he was capable of sympathizing with men. He had a nature capable of suffering, and a nature which could render his sufferings infinitely meritorious. Had he not been man, he could not have suffered and died; had he not been more than man, his sufferings and death would have been of no avail.

In the death of Christ we behold the righteousness of the law perfectly fulfilled (Rom. viii. 3.): so that, "as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, by the obedience of one, many were made righteous." And in this way, God manifested to the world, in one act, the strongest hatred to sin, and the greatest love to the sinner. Here is infinite love and infinite hatred, condemning with awful severity the sin to what it deserved, and advancing the sinner himself to undeserved, unexpected, and everlasting happiness; consuming the sin, and recovering the sinner; and doing all this by instruments who had no such intention. Satan is overthrown by his own hands; he that had "the power of death" is himself destroyed "by death;" by his cross, Jesus wrests the crown of dominion from the prince of darkness: Satan is altogether baffled, and the agents he inspired to effect his plans are completely disappointed. It was "by wicked hands, that Jesus was crucified and slain;" but thus "the counsel and foreknowledge of God were fulfilled," and the church of God ransomed by the blood of his Son.

Nor is the wisdom of God less conspicuous in the ways and means by which the redemption of Christ is applied to the hearts of man. How simple and plain is that glorious gospel, which is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth! The great salvation was not published by men famous for worldly wisdom; it was not by the force of human eloquence, or by the influence of human authority, that men were converted; but "this treasure was put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might plainly appear to be of God, and not of man." For the same reason, Faith is appointed to be the instrument of our justification; for Faith assumes no merit of its own; it simply and humbly receives the divine testimony, and with it the blessings promised, "without money and without price;" and "therefore it is of faith, that it may be by grace."

The wisdom of God has adapted the gospel to promote, in the most powerful manner, the practice of holiness and good works. While a salvation of pure grace is bestowed upon men, and becomes the ground of their confidence and the source of their hopes, they are powerfully induced and enabled to glorify God by their holy obedience. A true accquaintance with the gospel produces in the heart love both to God and men. Nothing is so powerful as love; and the love of God to us, if "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," must and will effect a return of love and gratitude to God; and if we love him, we shall keep his commandments, for this is the proper fruit of faith, and the best evidence of our sincerity.

CONCLUSION.

Let us improve the subject in three ways:—*Adore the wisdom of God—Rely on the wisdom of God*—and, *Implore wisdom of God.*

1. *Adore the wisdom of God.* Where can you turn your eyes without beholding it? Behold it in every object around you. Look at creation with this de-

sign, that the Creator, infinitely wise and good, may be adored. Thus shall "the whole world become a temple, and life itself be one continued act of adoration." But it is in "the new creation" that wisdom most brightly shines; it is "through Jesus Christ," as the text expresses it; through him, as the light of the world, God shines upon us; and through him as our Mediator, let our honours be paid to God.

2. *Rely on the wisdom of God.* In the common affairs of life we have frequent occasion for advice; and we gladly avail ourselves of the wisdom of a friend, of a physician, of a counsellor: but, O! what a privilege is it to a Christian, that the God of wisdom presides over the world, over the church, and over his private affairs! Commit, then, thy way to the Lord. Trust in him at all times, even at the worst of times. He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation: he knows how to make all things work together for good. "The Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him." Finally,

3. *Ask wisdom of God;* so he directs us to do. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God—and it shall be given him." We need wisdom in all our concerns, and should seek direction in the management of all our affairs; but chiefly we need it for our souls; for mistakes in religion are of all others the most dangerous. God has favoured us with the Bible, which is his own book of wisdom, and it is able to make us "wise unto salvation;" but we also need "the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation" to guide us into all truth, and to glorify Jesus, by revealing him to us as the way, the truth, and the life.—May we know, and love, and serve him on earth! daily increasing in true wisdom, and rejoicing in hope of a superior state, where our faculties shall be enlarged, and our knowledge improved; and where, with infinite gratitude, we shall still adopt the doxology in our text:—*To God, only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ.* Amen.

# SERMON LXIX.

ISAIAH VI. 3.

*Holy, holy, holy, is the* LORD *of Hosts.*

ALL the divine attributes are equally necessary to the perfection of his nature; and it may be improper to exalt any one of them above the rest: but it may be remarked, that no attribute of God is expressed in Scripture as his holiness is—no attribute is so awfully proclaimed: it is thrice repeated in a single sentence, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." We find this doxology in the account of a most remarkable vision, which Isaiah, the prophet, saw. "I saw the Lord," saith he, "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim;—and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." This is applied to Jesus Christ, in the gospel of St. John, where it is written, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." John xii. 41. We find another doxology of a similar kind, in Rev. iv. 8; where celestial beings are represented as giving glory to God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." From these and many other texts of Scripture, we learn a great and important doctrine, which we shall endeavour to illustrate and improve; namely, that

THE GREAT GOD IS INFINITELY PURE AND HOLY.

By holiness in the blessed God, we mean, that essential rectitude of his nature, whereby he takes infinite delight and pleasure in that which is pure and holy, and hates, with a perfect hatred every thing which is morally evil.

We consider holiness as essential, or absolutely necessary, to the very being and existence of God. We can have no right conception of a God without holiness. A God without holiness would be like a God without power, or a God without wisdom—he would be a monster, not a God. Many of the idols or pretended gods of the heathens, were indeed unholy; they were abominably impure; the patterns and the patrons of detestable vices; and therefore it is said in the song of Moses—"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?—who is like unto thee—*glorious in holiness?*" The holiness of God is the glory of God; it is the glory of all his other perfections:—of his power; hence we read of "his holy arm:"—of his truth; hence we read of "his holy promise:"—of his justice; for he is righteous in all "his ways, and holy in all his works." We say therefore that God is essentially holy; and it would be less absurd to say, There is no God, than to say, God is not holy.

Holiness is *originally* in God. If angels are holy, God made them so. If believers are holy, God made them so. But the holiness of God is not derived; it was eternally, originally, and unchangeably in him. Some of the holy angels sinned, and are become devils. Man, who was made holy at first, is now become an impure sinner; and the holiest creatures in the world, if left to themselves, might become unholy: but God is eternally holy; there is "no variableness with him, neither shadow of turning."

Let us now produce some evidence of this truth—some satisfactory proof that God is holy; and we may easily obtain this from the uniform testimony of the sacred Scriptures—from the original

condition of all rational creatures—from the holy law which God has given to men—from the anger he has manifested against unholy sinners—from the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ—and from the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of believers.

1. The holiness of God appears from the positive, uniform, repeated testimony of the sacred writers, in the Scriptures of truth. The great God himself, in whose light alone we see light, asserts his own character, and proclaims his own name. "I, the Lord your God, am holy." "I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour." This is ever the sanction of his holy commandments,—"Be ye holy, for I am holy." We need not multiply texts; the holy writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit himself, concur with the Seraphim in the text,—"One of whom cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory;" and observe, so awfully, so loudly was this proclamation made, that "the posts of the door," or the massy pillars of the temple, "moved at the voice of him that cried;" while the holy prophet himself trembled, and said, "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;"—that is, the holy "WORD," who was afterwards "made flesh, and dwelt among us." Such will ever be the humbling effect of right views of the holiness of God!

2. We refer to the original state of all rational and immortal beings. When formed by him, they were holy; for nothing morally evil could proceed from the pure hands of a holy God. The innumerable hosts of angels were created pure. Those who still retain their first estate are called "the holy angels; and those who fell were originally such. As to man, before his creation, God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and

accordingly—"God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him." Gen. i. 26, 27. It is no impeachment of the holiness of God, that he permitted his creatures to fall. All creatures are in their very nature changeable. God only is incapable of change. But though "God made man upright," yet he was capable of "seeking out many inventions." He was able to stand, yet capable of falling. He was created with a will perfectly free: he was capable of loving God and keeping his commandment; there was light in his understanding, rectitude in his heart, a rule to act by,—a promise to encourage him to obedience, and a threatening to deter him from sin. More was not necessary; his defection must be charged on himself: God is holy.

3. Consider the nature of the law, originally given to man in Paradise, and, long after, renewed at Sinai.

The substance of the eternal, unchangeable law of God is—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Less than this, a holy God cannot demand; less than this a holy creature cannot desire. The holiness of God was strongly expressed in the method which he took to secure the holiness of Adam, and in him, the holiness of all his posterity. What could have been a stronger inducement to obedience, than the hope of everlasting happiness for himself and all mankind? What a more powerful guard against sin, than the certain and eternal ruin of himself and all his race?

"The law," renewed and awfully published at Sinai, "is holy, and just, and good." It is the rule of holiness. By this we learn what is holy or unholy, especially when we learn that it "is spiritual," that it reaches to the secret thoughts of the heart, and condemns even an evil desire. Thus St. Paul assures us that he was convinced of sin, "because the law hath said, Thou shalt not covet." This obliged him to cry, "The law is spiritual, but

I am carnal." "The law entered that the offence might abound"—that men might be convinced how dreadfully their sins have abounded;—"and thus," saith he, "sin slew me," and "I died:"—"it was made death unto me, and sin, by the commandment, became exceeding sinful." See Romans vii. 9—14. Surely, this holy law—which is called perfect—pure—clean, and "righteous," and armed with a dreadful curse against every transgressor, is an awful proof that God is holy. So, however, Moses, the man of God, thought, when witnessing the fire, and tempest, and terrible voice which attended the giving of the law at Sinai: he said, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" and thus every man will think who is acquainted with the extent of its demands, and sensible of his own innumerable transgressions.

4. Let us take a view of the holiness of God as awfully displayed in his anger against sin and sinners.

The first display of this was in the expulsion of rebel angels from their thrones of glory. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment:"—they "kept not their first estate," and were therefore expelled from "their own habitation." What a dreadful proof do those once illustrious, and now degraded spirits, exhibit to the whole spiritual world of God's unconquerable and everlasting aversion to sin!

And see, with horror and surprise, man seduced by the devil, involved in the same condemnation. Well might Adam tremble at the sound of the once delightful voice of his Maker, when he approached, and cried, "Adam, where art thou?" "What is this that thou hast done?" and still more, when, dragged from his vain refuge, and in spite of his vain excuses, he hears the holy offended God say—"Cursed is the serpent"—"cursed is the ground;" yet, not altogether cursed is poor apostate man:

he is doomed, indeed, to severe labour and toils; and the penurious earth refuses to afford him bread, but at the expense of the sweat of his brow; the deluded woman also, first in the transgression, is doomed to be the subject of multiplied sorrows, pains, and infirmities.

When men were greatly increased, and sin became universal and triumphant, we see the holy God so provoked, that "it repented him he had made man, and it grieved him at the heart;" "he looked on the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way;" "then were the windows of heaven opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the waters prevailed exceedingly, and every living substance was destroyed in which was the breath of life. Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." What a dreadful proof was this that the holy God was angry with the wicked!

Remember the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Their sin was very grievous,—their cry was great;" and their crimes so general, that not ten righteous men could be found. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities; and the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Gen. xix. 24. But he delivered righteous Lot.

When the Canaanites had filled up the measure of their iniquities, he punished them with the sword of Joshua, and expelled them from their fruitful land, which flowed with milk and honey.

And when the children of Israel, though God's peculiar people, forgot their duty to him, indulged in vice, or forsook his worship, he delivered them into the hands of the Philistines or of the Assyrians; and at one time consigned them to captivity for seventy years in Babylon; and at length, when they crucified the Lord of glory, rejected his gos-

pel, and forbad it to be preached to the Gentiles, he brought upon them the fury of the Romans, who burnt their temple, destroyed their city, and dispersed them, the most miserable of mankind, among all the nations of the earth. Every Jew you see may remind you that God is holy.

Mark, also, how this holy Lord God has chastised some of his dear children, eminent saints, when they have indulged unholy tempers, or committed unholy actions. Moses, who spake unadvisedly with his lips, was not permitted to enter the goodly land he longed for. Jonah, when he deserted his duty, was imprisoned in the whale's belly: and David, when he fell into some gross sins, was severely visited, and the bloody sword was entailed upon his family. The holy God hates sin wherever he sees it, but most of all when he sees it in his children; as a gardener hates a weed the more, when he finds it in a bed of his choicest flowers. God is indeed reconciled to the sinner who believes, but he is never reconciled to his sins; he loves his person, but he hates his vices. Surely, then, believers should avoid even the appearance of evil, for they serve a holy God.

5. But we must visit Calvary, if we would behold at once the most awful and the most engaging display of the divine holiness. "Not all the vials of judgments which were ever poured out on a guilty world, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against rebellious devils, nor the groans of damned sinners, afford such a demonstration of God's hatred to sin, as the sufferings of Christ on the accursed tree." It was because he was infinitely displeased with sin, that "the Lord was pleased to bruise his Son, and put him to grief." It was Holiness that drew the veil between the Father's countenance and the Saviour's soul, when horrible darkness covered the earth, and he cried, in the bitterness of his broken heart, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God's af-

fection to his holiness seemed, in this instance, to surmount his affection to his Son. Rather should his well-beloved Son expire on a disgraceful cross, than sin should be suffered to live, and his holiness be disparaged by the violations of his law. Thus was sin made the chief mark of his displeasure, while the poor sinner becomes the happy object of his pitiful regard. The odiousness of sin is exposed, while the compassion of his heart is displayed. His infinite abhorrence of sin, and his infinite love to the sinner, go hand in hand together. Thus "Mercy and Truth meet together"—Mercy to the misery of the sinner, Truth to the purity of the law. "Righteousness and Peace embrace each other,"—the Righteousness of God, and the Peace of the believers in Jesus; and thus "there is forgiveness with God, *that he may be feared.*" And this leads us to the last evidence we shall produce of the holiness of God.

6. The holiness of God appears in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and in all the means appointed for that purpose.

God, who, from eternity, designed the everlasting happiness of his people, decreed that they should be holy; "he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son." Rom viii. 29. For this purpose he gave his Son, and his Son gave himself, "that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It was impossible that Jesus Christ, who is "the Holy One of Israel," should become "the minister of sin," or even permit the purchase of his blood to remain the slaves of corruption: he came "by water as well as by blood" (1 John vi. 6); and intended, by the power of his death and resurrection, to introduce us not only into a relative state of happiness by justification, but also into a real state of grace by sanctification. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also your-

selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 10.

For this purpose also the Holy Spirit is given to all believers; for, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It is by the gospel of truth that men are begotten again, and made new creatures: for "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." James i. 18. The gospel of the free grace of God, which some mistaken persons charge with an unholy tendency, is the very instrument of renewing them in holiness after the image of God. The Saviour promised that his disciples should know the truth, and that the truth should make them free; and again he prayed for his disciples, saying, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." John xvii. 17. The faith which they have in Christ, if true and genuine, has always this effect—"it purifies the heart;" "it works by love;" "it overcomes the world." If men, professing to receive the truth, and to believe in Christ, are not holy, we are bold to say that their knowledge is not true, their faith is not genuine. They deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them.

All the ordinances of God's appointment, and all the means of grace, private as well as public, are instruments in the hand of the Holy Spirit to promote the holiness of believers. They are properly called "means of grace;" for in the diligent use of them, God is pleased to communicate those "supplies of his Spirit," by which we are gradually and progressively transformed into his image, "from glory to glory."

For the same blessed end, he who governs the world, and orders all its affairs according to his all-wise and all-holy plan, so directs and overrules the affairs of his people that "all things work together for their good." They certainly do so, when they promote and increase their holiness. This is particularly affirmed of their afflictions; for though

these are irksome, and what we would gladly avoid, yet, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Afflictions are, indeed, "not joyous, but grievous;" nevertheless, "they yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness," and thus he who inflicts them, makes us "partakers of his holiness." Heb. xii. 6, 10, 11.

Thus then it appears—from the Scriptures, from the original state of man, from the law, from God's anger against sin, from the death of Christ, and from the work of the Spirit—that our God is a most holy God.

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We conclude with some practical inferences from what has been advanced: and,

1. *Is God so holy? then how base and sinful is the hatred of holiness!* So awfully is man fallen, that he is not only by nature destitute of holiness, but he hates it in others. He forms a false notion of God, as if he were not holy. It is charged upon the sinner (Ps. l. 21) "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,"—an unholy being, that could dispense with sin; as the heathens worshipped fancied gods who were wicked, like themselves. No wonder, then, that those who love sin hate holiness in others. Hence, all endeavours to be holy are despised, by many persons, as mere hypocrisy; and the very name—*a saint*, is a term of the utmost contempt. A surer sign of being, at present, a child of the devil, there cannot be, than to hate and despise holiness; for this is to hate and despise God himself, for he is holy, and holiness is his image. But let it be remembered, that, "without holiness, no man can see the Lord;" and, most assuredly, they are "without holiness" themselves, who despise it in others. Let such persons tremble and repent.

2. *Is God so holy? then what cause is there for humiliation!* Let all men, let even the best of men, prostrate themselves in deep humiliation before

this holy Lord God. So did the holy prophet, Isaiah, when he saw the vision in the text, and heard the words of it pronounced. "Woe is me!" said he, "for I am a man of unclean lips!" So, when holy Job had a special manifestation of the power and holiness of God, he cried, "Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A right view of the holiness of God will effectually repress the pride of our minds, and keep us from boasting of good hearts and good works, and from "going about to establish our own righteousness." "Shall mortal man pretend to be just with God?" Shall he pretend to be pure in his sight? Far be it. Deep repentance and self-abhorrence better become him.

3. *We may learn from hence the need of a Mediator and Redeemer.* If we are duly impressed with the truth now declared, we shall cry, with the Bethshemites of old, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" Who, indeed? In themselves, none can stand. The best man must say, with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." There can be no safe approach to this holy God, but by Jesus Christ the Mediator. "No man," said he, "cometh to the Father but by me." But, blessed be God, we may come, we are invited thus to come. God has declared himself to be reconciled through the death of his Son; and now, by his servants, condescends to intreat us to be reconciled to him. Yes! we may now come: come even with freedom and boldness to the throne of his grace, and there obtain mercy to pardon all our sins, and grace to help us in every time of need.

4. Finally. *Is God holy? then let us also be holy.* Such is the high command of God himself—"Be ye holy, for I am holy." This should be our grand object. Here is the bright, the only perfect example, for our imitation. For this purpose, being born in sin, we must needs "be born again"—

born of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious influences on the heart, through faith in the gospel, make us a kind of "new creatures"—bring us as it were, into a new world; for such it is to every one who, contrary to the example of the world, sincerely hates sin and loves holiness.

This will render our worship truly holy. "Holiness becometh the house of God for ever." Let us then "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;" let us "praise his great and terrible name, for he is holy;" let us "sing his praises with understanding." Let us also aim at still higher degrees of purification,—still beholding in the gospel, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. May we be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory,"—"perfecting holiness in the fear of God!"

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

# SERMON LXX.

DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 4.

*Just and right is he.*

JUSTICE, among men, is giving to every one his due; and the importance of doing so is acknowledged by every honest man. It is easy to see that there could be no safety nor happiness in society, if justice were not regarded. If there are any persons who do not approve of the administrations of justice, it is probably that they themselves are unjust. The character of a judge may not be very amiable in the eyes of a criminal prisoner, and he may not look forward to the approaching assizes with any degree of pleasure; he would perhaps be willing to dispense with the whole system of justice, in our laws, because he is exposed to the punishment which those laws require; but honest and virtuous men highly approve of the execution of justice. They regulate all their affairs, in their dealings with men, by a regard to justice; and they wish to be treated in the same manner by their neighbours. This general regard to justice; this tribute of mankind to its excellence, leads us naturally to conclude that it must have the sanction of divine authority, and that it must be a perfection of the divine nature; and we could as easily conceive of a God without power, or a God without goodness, as of a God without justice. We are not left, however, to the mere conjectures or

conclusions of reason; we have the fullest authority from God's own word, to assure us that he is perfectly just. The assertion is made in the text, which is taken from the song of Moses; not that which was sung immediately after the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, but that which he uttered just before his death, and solemnly delivered to the people. He begins the sacred ode by ascribing glory to God; first, the glory of his greatness; and here, the glory of his justice and righteousness.

By the justice of God, we understand that universal rectitude of his nature, whereby, in his government of the world, he does all things with perfect righteousness, giving to every one his due.

1. We are to consider God, not only as the Maker and Preserver of men, but as their *Governor* also. He who made man and furnished him with all his wonderful powers, has an unbounded right to prescribe laws for his conduct, and to enforce the laws which he prescribes by sufficient sanctions, by rewards and punishments, as in his infinite wisdom he sees fit; and in so doing, he consults the good of his creatures, as well as his own glory; for as the peace and order of society cannot be maintained without human laws properly enforced; so we cannot conceive of the preservation of the divine government, without laws worthy of a wise, holy, and just God.

This right seems to have been exercised towards Adam at his creation. Besides the moral law, the substance of which is love to God and man, and which was written on his heart, a *positive* law was given to him, as the test of his obedience. One particular tree, though as pleasant to the eyes and as good for food as others, was forbidden, and that on pain of death; for this positive law was armed with a dreadful sanction—"in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

In like manner, God has given laws to all mankind. For many ages they were handed down from father to son, and afterwards renewed to the Jews

(and through them to a great part of the world) in an awful manner, at Sinai: and where men have not this written law, they have, as St. Paul assures us, "a law in themselves, the work of the law written in their hearts; and their consciences (more or less informed) accusing or excusing them," according as they observe or break it. Rom. ii. 14.

Now the law which God has given to man, is worthy of himself. It is said, in Rom. vii. 12, to be "Holy, and just, and good:" it requires nothing but what God may justly require of man; nothing but what man ought to pay: for, can any thing be more reasonable, than that we should love the supreme good in a supreme manner; and, loving him, should abstain from what he forbids, and perform what he requires; especially when both would be for our advantage, our safety, and our happiness; and when disobedience would terminate only in our everlasting destruction? Thus, as the apostle saith, "the commandment was ordained unto life;" —"but," he adds, in words that well demand our serious regard—"I found it to be unto *death*." Rom. vii. 10. For now, alas! man is a fallen creature; fallen in Adam, the first sinner; and is no longer able to render the full obedience required by the law. God, however, has not lost his right to command. His law, like himself, is unchangeable; and if not obeyed, renders the sinner liable to his just and awful displeasure.

2. We observe then, in the next place, that God is just in punishing disobedience to his holy law. As he sanctioned the law of Paradise, with that dreadful threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" so he sanctions the moral law with a terrible curse, as it is written (Gal. iii. 10), "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to *do* them." Observe, he who performs not *all things*, he who *continues* not to perform them all, without omitting one, without a single failure in

thought, word, or deed; and, that this is the meaning of the passage appears from another text in St. James, (ch. ii. 10) "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The law has not relaxed in its demands, in consequence of the fall and frailty of man. Some have pretended that now *sincere obedience* only is required, instead of perfect obedience; but this notion has no foundation in Scripture, and tends strongly to encourage sin; for most men, however sinful, flatter themselves that they are sincere, though imperfect. It is not by reducing the demands of the law, that a sinner is entitled to entertain hope of salvation; but by looking to him whom the gospel sets before us as "the end of the law for righteousness," who has "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. iii. 13. But the law itself affords no relief! it may convince; it must condemn; and it leaves every one, who seeks salvation by obedience to it, under its fearful curse. St. Paul therefore justly concludes (ver. 10) that "as many as are under the law, are under the curse;" and, "that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." It is by the *gospel*, and not by the law, that we obtain the knowledge of Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sins; that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 19—25.

3. If we consult the Scriptures, we shall find that God has displayed his justice, in many awful instances, by the punishment of sinners.*

The rebel angels were expelled from heaven; they are awful monuments of his justice already; and will be rendered visibly such in the judgment of the great day. What a dreadful revolution did sin occasion

* The following instances are more briefly expressed, on account of their having been introduced in the sermon on God's Holiness; but it was not proper wholly to pass over them in a discourse on Divine Justice.

in *our* world! See Adam cast out from Paradise; the earth cursed for his sake; the man doomed to severe labour; the woman to multiplied sorrows; the creature "made subject to vanity;" and trouble, sickness, and death, like a mighty flood, overwhelming all mankind.

When men had multiplied on the earth, sin seems to have preserved a sad proportion to their numbers; and wickedness rose to such a daring height, that Justice could no longer forbear, but opened the windows of Heaven, and unbarred the gates of the great abyss, and poured universal destruction on a guilty world.

At another time, fire from Heaven consumed the base inhabitants of Sodom; and the sword of Israel was the instrument of divine justice in the extirpation of the wicked Canaanites. Israel herself, highly favoured as she was of God, could not escape his chastising hand, but always suffered when she sinned. It was divine justice that armed the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, and made them the severe scourges of an ungrateful and backsliding nation. In like manner, nation after nation, in their turn, having filled up the several measures of their iniquities, have declined and perished. Men ascribe their fall to the ambition of a neighbouring conqueror; but the real cause was predominant sin, punished by the sword of divine justice.

It is true that God does not always execute immediate justice on every transgressor; but this is no impeachment of that perfection, although it be abused by some: "because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, the hearts of men are fully set in them to do evil." It is possible that the impunity with which some atrocious rebels seem to sin, may stumble even believers themselves, who cry, in the perplexity of their spirit, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" "How long, O Lord, shall the wicked triumph?"

But they should remember that the Judge of all the earth will certainly do right. Sometimes the wicked may be spared as instruments of public good. Contrary to their intentions, they may eventually effect the purposes of Heaven. Besides the present is a state of probation. God is giving them "time and space for repentance," and if they repent not, his arm that delays to strike, will fall with a heavier blow hereafter; and patience abused, will aggravate their future punishment.

Often, however, the great God convinces the world that he has not relinquished the government of it. His vengeance falls heavily on some distinguished rebels. Bloody persecutors have sometimes been signally cut off. Murderers have often been remarkably detected. Perjured wretches, and those who have called God to witness their falsehoods, have been suddenly destroyed; and conscience, awakened and terrified, has frequently supplied the place of accusers, witnesses, judge, and executioner. Yes! and thus "God is known by the judgment that he executeth." Ps. ix. 16. "Verily, there is a God that judgeth on the earth."

Indeed, the operation of conscience, in general, among all the children of men, affords a striking evidence of the justice of God. Why else is it that every man feels pleasure when he has performed a good action, and pain when he has committed a bad one? Conscience, like the grand jury in our excellent constitution, finds the bill that is afterwards to be publicly tried, and frequently anticipates too the fatal result of the trial. And although there are instances in which good men are exercised with heavy affliction, and others in which bad men enjoy abundant prosperity, yet it is certain that that which is good tends to good, and that which is evil tends to evil. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness;" "godliness is great gain;" "length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour." A life of virtue and religion tends to health,

wealth, and long life; while, on the other hand, vice and ungodliness as powerfully tend to disease, poverty, infamy, and death; and this wise distribution of things is a standing evidence of the justice of God.

4. But the most affecting display of divine justice was made in the sufferings and death of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Indeed, this was the chief design of the death of Christ. When all men had "sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" when they had dishonoured his holy law by their disobedience,—in what way could the honour of God be restored? If justice alone take place, the sentence of death must be executed, and every transgressor receive the wages of his sin; but if mercy interpose, and spare the guilty, what becomes of the justice of God? Here divine wisdom steps in, and provides equally for the glory of justice and of mercy. "God so loved the world that he gave"—"he spared not, his only-begotten Son." "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; our sins were made to meet upon him; and the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all." And why was this done? St. Paul says, it was to "declare the righteousness or justice of God;" and thus to convince all the world that "he is just, while the justifier of him that believeth." Thus a just and holy God "condemned sin in the flesh" (of his own Son) "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in (or *for*) us."—See *Isa.* liii. 5; *Rom.* iii. 25; and viii. 3. On this ground, God will appear to be *just*, as well as merciful, in pardoning and justifying the believer in Jesus. On this ground it is said, concerning the penitent and believing sinner, "Save him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Job xxxiii. Grace is thus exalted to the highest degree, but not to the disparagement of justice; both are exalted together; as saith the apostle (Rom. iii. 24), "Being justified freely

by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." If pardon for the chief of sinners could not be obtained, how would it appear that God is infinitely merciful? But if pardon were bestowed without any satisfaction for sin, how would it appear that God is infinitely just? But when God is pleased to punish sin in the person of his dear Son, and in consequence of the honour done to his law, thereby, he is pleased to pardon and save the guilty, abundant provision appears to be made for the glory both of justice and mercy; and thus, "Grace reigns," but it "reigns *through righteousness*,"—through the justice of God in punishing sin, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the illustrious sufferer. Rom. v. 21.

On this foundation, the vilest sinners, the greatest offenders, being penitent, may hope for mercy; for "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins?"—not for the merit of repentance, as some falsely conclude, but because "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," as St. John saith (1 John i. 7, 9), and as he affirms immediately after, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." He further informs us on what grounds this powerful Advocate pleads for our pardon; this immediately follows: "He is the propitiation for our sins," ver. 2. He does not, therefore, sue for mere mercy; he pleads the price paid, the ransom laid down, the death endured; and the covenant, the promise, and the oath of the Father made with and to him, in behalf of all who were given to him, redeemed by him, and who apply to him for salvation. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." John vi. 37, and John xvii. 24.

Thus we have seen that God is infinitely just. Let us then "ascribe righteousness to our Maker." His ways may sometimes appear to be mysterious, but never let his justice be suspected. "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right!" Unquestionably. When he corrects his children, when he punishes his enemies, we ought to say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."

If God be just, we may certainly conclude that there will be a day of judgment. If God be just, "it shall be well with the righteous; it shall be ill with the wicked." If God be just, then "what a man sows, he shall certainly reap," and every man shall receive according to his works. If so, there must be a day of judgment—the day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." At present, wicked men may escape punishment, for this is the day of God's patience, and our trial. But such are the irregularities of the present state of things, that there must needs be a day of settling, a state of retribution. Let not then the daring offender flatter himself with impunity. If the young man "rejoice in his youth, and he walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes;" let him know this—that "for all these things God will bring him into judgment." O! stand in awe, and sin not, for God will bring every work and thought into judgment, whether it be good or bad. If sinners would escape the punishment of their sin, let them believe the gospel, and take refuge in Christ. There is no safe approach to this just and holy God, without a Mediator; but through him, who has glorified divine justice by his obedience to death, the greatest sinners may be accepted.

If God be glorious in his justice, it will be our honour to imitate him. "If we know that he is

righteous, we know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." If justice require us to give every one his due, let us study to be just both towards God and man. Let us "give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." He who gives us all our powers, requires that we should give him our hearts. Yes; constrained by the mercies of God, let us present unto him our whole selves, body and soul, time, talents, and influence, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.

Let us also be just to men. The great, the golden, the divine rule of conduct is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even the same unto them." "Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear: honour to whom honour." God abhors dishonesty, deceit, and oppression; "false weights and measures are an abomination to the Lord;" but "to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to him than sacrifice." God rejected the fasts of the Jews, as solemn mockeries, because they did not "loose the bands of wickedness, and undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free." Nor would he accept of their offerings, "till judgment ran down like water, and righteousness as a mighty stream." In vain do tradesmen and workmen, masters and servants, profess a regard to the gospel, unless they adorn the holy doctrine by a holy life; an eminent branch of which is, to act uprightly and conscientiously. Let no man then "go beyond and defraud his brother, because that the Lord is the avenger of all such."

Finally, let us *rely* on the justice of God. The justice of God is engaged on the behalf of believers, as well as his mercy. By the righteousness of Christ, justice is fully satisfied, and has no demands to make on the believer; but the

Christian may humbly plead the justice of God in his favour. He is just, when he justifies the believer; and if we confess our sins, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He is pleased to bind himself by his own free promises, and will assuredly be just in fulfilling them. Hence, it is written, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, and labour of love." He will do right. Much evil and injustice there now is, and always has been in the world. But every wrong, private, domestic, or public, will be called over in the great day. Then none will be thought too mean to engage his regard, none too great to escape his justice. Let this render the oppressed patient under their wrongs: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." He will execute righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." He will make "inquisition for blood."

Let the justice of God reconcile his people to all their afflictions. The King of heaven can do no wrong; "the just Lord will do no iniquity." Are we punished or chastised? Let us say with holy Daniel, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face: the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth; for we obeyed not his voice." Dan. ix. 8. 14. He is "justified when he speaketh; he is clear when he judgeth."

From the justice of God, let his people expect a full accomplishment of all the gracious promises on which he has caused them to hope. "Verily there is a reward for the righteous;"—a reward of grace, not of debt. None shall be losers by him. If they "suffer for righteousness' sake; if men revile them, and persecute them, and say all manner of evil against them, falsely, for his sake, blessed are they; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." If they pray in secret, if they fast in

private, if they give but a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ, they shall in nowise lose their reward. Take courage, then, ye humble followers of Christ; be patient until the coming of our Lord; be not weary of well doing; fight the good fight; persevere in your course; keep the faith; for henceforth there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto you at that day;" and then shall an assembled world be constrained to say, "He is the rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity—*Just and right is he.*"

# SERMON LXXI.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7.

*Whither shall I flee from thy presence?*

WHEN the great and glorious God is the object of our meditation, a holy awe should possess our minds, like that which Moses felt when he approached the burning bush, which displayed a visible token of the divine presence: he was then commanded to take off his shoes as a mark of reverence, for the presence of God made the place itself holy. So when Abraham conversed with Jehovah in prayer, being deeply sensible of his own unworthiness, he cried out, "Behold! I, who am dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak to the Most High God!" Such thoughts as these should fill our hearts, when we attempt to display, with our feeble and polluted powers, the infinite perfections of the great Supreme.

That awful, sublime, and most useful truth, which now calls for our serious attention, is this,

## THE GREAT GOD IS EVERYWHERE PRESENT.

This doctrine seems necessarily to result from our belief of a divine Being, at least of such a Being as deserves the title *Divine;* for to suppose him confined to certain bounds and limits, is, in

* As these Sermons are intended chiefly for plain people, the author admits a hard word unwillingly; but when the Divine Perfections are the subject, it is difficult to avoid this entirely. It may be sufficient to say, that *Omnipresence* is unbounded presence, or a presence everywhere. In like manner, *Omnipotent* signifies Almighty—powerful without limit. *Omniscient* is infinitely wise, knowing every thing.

fact, to make him no God at all. Although some of the heathens said great things of their deities, yet in general their notions of them were low and trifling. They imagined that different gods presided over different countries; and, on some occasions, chained down their idols lest they should forsake them. Elijah, the prophet of Jehovah, rallied the disappointed worshippers of Baal; for, when they had cried from morning till noon, "O Baal, hear us!" and there was no answer, Elijah mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god" (so you profess to believe;) but perhaps he is too busy to regard you—"he is talking, or pursuing, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep, and must be awaked." 1 Kings xviii. 27. But the glorious God, whom we adore, cannot thus be mocked; he is present everywhere; and especially, "where two or three" are assembled for his worship. He is here.

That God is, and cannot but be, everywhere present, will evidently appear, if you consider,

1. *His Infinity;*
2. *His Universal Providence;* and,
3. *The testimonies of Scripture.*

1. *God is infinite;* and therefore omnipresent. To be *infinite*, is to be *without bounds* or limits; consequently, there are no limits to his presence. An infinite Being cannot be contained in a finite space. It is the property of all *creatures* to be confined within certain bounds; and therefore we call them *finite;* but it is the property of the Creator to be unlimited, confined by no bounds; and therefore he is termed *infinite.* He is so in all his perfections: his knowledge is infinite; his power is infinite; his holiness is infinite, and so is his presence. "Whither then shall I flee from thy presence?"

Let us illustrate this great truth from the psalm

before us;—and especially from the verses which follow our text. "If I ascend up into *Heaven*, thou art there: if I make my bed in *Hell*, behold, thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the *uttermost parts of the sea;* even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the *darkness* shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me!" In vain then shall we try to shun his presence. Search the universe; explore all nature; but you shall find no place without God!

Search *Heaven.* Heaven is his throne, the seat of his glory; there he will certainly be found; for it is the happiness of saints and angels that they "always behold his face." We know not the extent of the heavenly world; innumerable are its blessed inhabitants; but "all the pure in heart see God;" nor can we suppose that any person who is so happy as to be admitted into that glorious state, can hide, or wish to hide himself, from his presence.

Or if, by the *heavens* we understand the visible, the material heavens, that vast space in which we behold the sun, the moon, and the stars of light; extended as these are beyond the utmost powers of calculation or conception, there shall no spot in all the vast domain be found, in which God is not. The sun is said to be ninety-four millions of miles distant from the earth; and the fixed stars are thought to be many hundred thousand millions of miles distant. What immensity, what grandeur, what glory is here! God is here.

"If I make my bed in *Hell*" (Hebrew, *Sheol.*) If by Hell we understand the place of torment, where impenitent sinners are confined in chains of darkness, there, indeed, in a most awful sense, is God present!—present in the dreadful power of his incensed justice, inflicting the deserved punishment of sin; for amongst the myriads of those miserable creatures, there is not one who escapes his notice, or avoids his rod.

But the word *Hell* sometimes signifies the *invisible world*,—the state of souls departed, whether in happiness or in misery. Of this state, as to the manner of their existence, mortals yet in the body know very little; it is to us the invisible, the unknown state: but is not so to God. Jesus Christ is said (Rev. i. 18) to have "the keys of Hell and Death"—that is, of the invisible world, and of death, by which the spirits of men are separated from the body, and enter into the invisible world; consequently this state, and all the souls which are in it, are perfectly known to him; it is therefore impossible to avoid his presence there.

And thus, if we refer to the most distant parts of the sea and land, though far removed from the known and inhabited parts of the globe, in deserts and forests yet untrod by the foot of man, even there, everywhere, would God be present; and to make the foolish attempt of hiding from him would be as vain as the effort of the refractory prophet Jonah was, "who fled from the presence of the Lord," in the land of Israel; but God followed him to the ocean; and, by a dreadful storm, convinced him of his error, and taught him obedience.

This glorious perfection of God is intimately connected with another, equally essential to his being, that is, his *Omniscience* or *Universal Knowledge*. God's knowing all things, implies his being everywhere present. The imperfection of man is very obvious; his knowledge, like his presence, is confined to very narrow limits. His relations, his friends, it may be, are in a foreign country, and he is anxious to know their condition; but he must wait weeks and months before he can obtain it. His dearest friends are at a few miles distance; they sicken and die, and he knows it not. Distance deprives him of the knowledge of the event. He is confined to one place. But God beholds, at one glance, all the children of men in every place; all their actions, all their words, all their thoughts. Yea, saith He, "every beast of

the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine." Yea, farther still: "he telleth the stars, he calleth them all by their names." "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings." "There is not a word on our tongues, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether!" "No thought can be withholden from him." "He seeth wickedness." "He seeth in secret." "Hell and destruction are before the Lord;—how much more then the hearts of the children of men!" Surely, therefore, God is everywhere present. This will farther appear, if we refer to,

2. *His Universal Providence.*

We have already noticed his universal observation of men, their thoughts, their words and their actions: but he is not a mere *spectator* of what passes in the world. Of that world he is the constant Supporter and Governor. He "upholds all things by the word of his power:" "by him all things *consist*," that is, they *stand together*, in the same harmonious order in which he first placed them. Nothing in the universe lives or moves, independent of him. The sun, the moon, the planets maintain their stations, or move in their orbits, by his influence. The seasons revolve; summer and winter, spring-time and harvest, succeed each other at their appointed periods. The earth produces food for man; yea, the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, look to him for sustenance, and he giveth them their food in due season. The very sparrows are not beneath his notice, and the hairs of our head are all numbered.

He controls the affairs of empires and nations: the "hearts of kings are in his hand, and he is Governor among the nations." He overrules even the policy, the pride, the ambition, and the avarice of wicked men, for the purposes of his own

glory, and makes them the unwilling instruments of promoting the very objects which they wished to destroy.

But this *special providence* of God is exercised in behalf of his church: hence it is that God has committed the management of the whole world to Christ the Mediator. "Angels, principalities, and powers, are all subject to him;" and he employs them for the benefit of his people. "All power," said he to his disciples, "in heaven and earth is mine; therefore go and preach the gospel to all nations;" and for your encouragement in that work, whatever difficulties you may encounter, whatever opposition you may meet with, remember this, "I am with you" (and will be with your successors in the Christian ministry) "always even to the end of the world." It was the belief, and the sense, of the presence of Christ, that rendered the apostles and martyrs laborious and dauntless in their holy labours, and serene and joyful in prison, and at the stake; it was this which made St. Paul rejoice that, when "all men forsook him," when he appeared before Nero, "the Lord stood with him and strengthened him:" and this presence of the Lord (miraculously visible) animated Stephen, the first confessor, when he said to the Sanhedrim, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

If farther evidence be necessary to prove the universal presence of God, let us, in the last place, derive it from,

3. *The Testimonies of Scripture.*

Many of these have already been produced, in the two particulars already mentioned; a few more will strengthen the evidence.

It is expressly affirmed (Prov. xv. 3) that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;" and again, in 2 Chron. xvi. 9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout

the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him." It must needs be so, if you consider that the divine inspection reaches even to the hearts of men, so that the most secret springs and movements of our minds, though unknown to our fellow-mortals, are fully exposed to his observation. Thus, when aged David transferred the kingdom to Solomon his son, he exhorted him "to serve the Lord with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind," enforcing his exhortation with this solemn truth, "for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." Happy would it have been for Solomon, had he duly regarded this! Happy will it be for us, if we habitually regard it!

When Jesus Christ dictated to St. John the seven epistles to the angels of the seven churches in Asia, he says to each of them, "I know thy works;" and he adds to one of them—"These things, saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire; all the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to your works." Rev. ii. 23. The belief of this truth enabled Peter to appeal to his Master, when the question was thrice repeated, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter replied, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." In a word, "there is not any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 13.

The presence of God is, in a most gracious manner, granted to his church. The name of the church, as predicted by the prophet, was to be, "*Jehovah Shamah*—The Lord is there." Of the temple at Jerusalem, the centre of the ancient church, God was pleased to say, "My heart and my eyes shall be there continually," denoting his most gracious presence, and parental affection; and we are sure that the church of Christ is not

deserted by its glorious King. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name," said the Saviour, "there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20. None but an Omnipresent and consequently a divine Person, could say this; and what an encouragement does this afford to public worship and social prayer! Jesus, the Son of God, is always present to assist, accept, and bless his pious friends!

But I imagine that I need not multiply Scripture testimonies to that point. The truth is sufficiently established. O that it were more generally regarded! Few deny the omnipresence of God: but alas! many forget it. It stands in need therefore, not so much of proof, as of practical

## IMPROVEMENT.

From hence we may learn how much there is of *Practical Atheism* in all wilful sin.

Surely Adam forgot himself, when he sought to be hidden "from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden." Ah! how could he suppose that the thickest trees of Eden could conceal him from the sight of his Omniscient Maker? So soon did sin introduce guilt, and fear, and *folly*! And yet his posterity approve and imitate his conduct. They think, or seem to think, that they may sin without his observation. "The wicked hath said in his heart (if not with his tongue) God hath forgotten: he hideth his face, he will never see it:" but the Psalmist reproves the atheistical notion, and immediately adds, "Thou *hast* seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand." Psalm x. 11. Why then do the workers of iniquity evade the light of day, court the shadows of night, shun the notice of fellow-mortals, and retire to secret places? The reason is, "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "These are the people," said Job in old time, "who

rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." On the contrary, "the eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me; and disguiseth his face." In like manner the housebreaker is described:—"In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day-time; they know not the light; for the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if any one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." Job xxiv. 13, &c. Now, what practical atheism is all this! What! do these *night-sinners* believe there is a God? *What!* a God? a God, like a man, who is deceived by darkness? But such a God would be no God at all. Let these mistaken and presumptuous sinners know, that "there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Job xxxiv. 22. Let them observe what is said in this Psalm (ver. 11.) "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee!" Wretched mortals, deceive yourselves no longer! Reflect a moment, and you will perceive your mistake. Why do you shun the eye of man? Are you afraid of him? And will you not be afraid of God? Will the presence of a child keep you from a wicked action? And will not the presence of God do it? Ah! sinner, even your "secret sins are placed in the light of his countenance;" and if not repented of, and pardoned, and forsaken, they will all be published before an assembled world at the day of judgment; for, "God will bring every secret thing into judgment, whether it be good or bad." He will then "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart." Then the book of God's remembrance,

in which is recorded every sinful deed, shall be opened, and "the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the book, according to their works." Eccles. xii. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 5; Rev. xx. 12. Cheat then your own souls no longer with the pretence of secrecy; and know that there is no house so privately situated, no time or place so unsuspected, no chamber so retired, no curtains so closely drawn, as to hide the guilty deed from the all-seeing eyes of an ever-present God. You cannot deceive him; ah! why should you deceive yourself?

While this subject suggests matter of reproof, and even of terror, to guilty sinners, it may become a source of *consolation* to the sincere Christian. It affords comfort to him in his private retirements for devotion. He withdraws from the busy and the gay world, to converse with his Bible and his God in secret; and his Father, "who seeth in secret, shall reward him openly." So Jesus said to the devout Nathaniel, that "Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile—when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee:" he had retired probably to his garden, secluded from the eyes and ears of men, for the purpose of meditation and prayer; perhaps earnestly desiring to know whether Jesus were the true Messiah or not. There the eye of Christ beheld him—not the eye of his humanity, but of his divinity, from which the darkest shade affords no concealment. This discovery of Christ's knowledge fully convinced Nathaniel that Jesus was the Messiah. The omnipresent Saviour still observes the closet religion of his people, though carefully concealed from the eye of the world, and he will, in the great day, reward it openly.

In deep affliction, it is a comfort to know that the Lord is at hand—"a very present help in the time of trouble." "Lover and friend," it may be, "are far away:" relations and physicians may be

at a distance; but God is not far from us; and the language of his promises is, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God: I will help thee." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." Animated by these most gracious declarations, the Christian may boldly say, "God is my refuge and strength; therefore will I not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." These promises have been made good to believers, and they have found "joy and peace in believing." Christians, banished from their native country, have still enjoyed the presence of their God, which is confined to no particular spot. Shut up in loathsome dungeons, prisons have become palaces, for the king was there: and encircled with furious flames, the raging fire could not scorch them, for the Son of God was present with them in the furnace.

Finally, Let all us take care habitually to recollect the presence of God. This will prove the most powerful check to our remaining corruptions, the most effectual shield against Satanic temptations, and the sharpest spur to holy duties. Remember that God is present. This is a rule in religion, of the greatest practical importance. In vain was Moses solicited by the luxuries of Pharaoh's court; in vain assaulted by the terrors of Pharaoh's anger: "he endured as seeing him who is invisible." When Satan tempts us to sinful actions, let it be recollected that "God seeth us;" "he knoweth the way that we take;" and let his presence prevail over the presence of the tempter. Are we called to perform difficult and laborious services? Weak as we are in ourselves, we can do

all things through Christ, who strengtheneth us." Why should we faint or fear, when, by his Spirit, "he worketh in us, both to will and to do?" And in the performance of every duty let the presence of God keep us close to our business. Bad servants are called in Scripture, "Eye-servants," because they will not work unless their masters' eyes are upon them. Then, even idle servants will be industrious. We work, my friends, under the eye of our divine and gracious Master. He is present with us at all times. Let us therefore "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for we assuredly know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord:" and when that work is finished, he will say to each of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then shall we know, in a far higher and happier manner than we can now know, what the presence of the Lord means. Now "we see him through a glass darkly; then shall we see him face to face, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." "Comfort one another, brethren, with these delightful words." The text will never more become a question, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"—for "in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Amen.

# SERMON LXXII.

ROMANS II. 4.

*Despisest thou the richness of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

AMONG the various perfections of God, which render him infinitely worthy of our admiration and love, his *Patience* requires our peculiar regard, for there is not a human being upon earth who is not interested in it. God himself accounts it his glory to exercise patience towards the children of men, for when his servant Moses desired to see his glory, God was pleased to make a solemn proclamation of his name, including this amiable perfection, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, *long suffering*, and abundant in goodness and truth." His patience is his glory; it is "a diadem belonging to the imperial crown of Heaven." He glories in it as peculiar to himself. "I will not," saith he, "execute the fierceness of my anger, for I am God, and not man;" as if he had said, "Had I been man, the best and most patient man, I had destroyed them long ago; but as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways above the ways of man." And it is with a design to exalt the glory of this divine attribute, that St. Paul, in our text, speaks of "the *riches* of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering," together with the genuine tendency of these, which is "to lead the sinner to repentance;" he bears with thee, that thou mayest prevent the dreadful blow, by humbling thyself before him, and forsaking thy sins. From these words we shall take occasion to shew, that,

The great, holy, and just God, exercises most astonishing *patience* towards his sinful creatures.

Patience, forbearance, long suffering, suppose the commission of offences. If God does not speedily punish the sins of men, it is not because he is not displeased with them. This, indeed, was the mistake of the Jews, to whom St. Paul speaks in our text. The goodness of God to them made some of them think, that he would not punish the children of Abraham for their sins; but the apostle tells them, that they formed a wrong judgment of God, whose patience was not intended to lull them asleep in security, but to give them time, and space, and motive, to repentance. If God does not at once execute his judgments on wicked transgressors, it is not because he does not notice them, and hate them, and determine to punish them. He who is infinitely holy, hates sin with a perfect abhorrence, of which he has given the world sufficient evidence in the numerous calamities which everywhere abound, in consequence of sin. The earth was cursed for man's sake; it produces thorns and thistles; cares, labours, and troubles; sickness, sorrow, and death; to remind the children of Adam that they have sinned, and that he is displeased.

The great God, seated on his eternal throne, beholds every individual of all the millions of mankind, and none of their actions can be concealed from his notice. He knows our "down-sitting and our up-rising; he compasseth our path, and our lying-down, and is acquainted with all our ways:" and, Oh, what a world of iniquity does he behold! —"the whole world," saith St. John, "lieth in wickedness"—a rebel universe!—our species up in arms, not one exempt! The Scripture testifies that "all are under sin; that there is none righteous, no, not one:" that so, "every mouth may be

stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Rom. iii. 10, &c. And if every one be a sinner, if God beholds innumerable sins in every one of us, what must be the collected sum of a thousand millions of sinners who inhabit the earth? And who can calculate the amount of sins repeated throughout the life of each transgressor, continued (in the case of many) for fifty years or more? God hears every oath that sinners utter: he hears thousands of these every moment. He observes all the lascivious glances of the eye, he follows the lewd and filthy sinner into the most secret chamber: he witnesses all the acts of fraud, and cruelty, and oppression, which are daily committed: and he beholds all these, not with indifference, but with infinite abhorrence, for "he is angry with the wicked every day." "I know," saith he, "your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins" (Amos v. 12); and, in another place (Ezek. xi. 5.) he says, "I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them." What provoking acts of iniquity does he behold in courts, in senates, in ships, in play-houses, in taverns, and in brothels; yea, in churches too, where, too often, formality, wandering eyes and wandering hearts, hypocrisy, and unbelief, sins most hateful in his eyes, are to be found! All these things are noticed in order that they may be punished; they are recorded in his book of remembrance, and will be brought into judgment in the great day of accounts.

Let it not be supposed that God is not displeased, beeause he does not yet punish. Not only do the evils which abound in the world manifest his anger against sin, but the testimonies of his word most fully and strongly declare it. Hear what he said to Israel in old time (Ps. lxxviii. 40), "How oft did they provoke me in the wilderness, and grieve me in the desert;"—"forty years long was I grieved with this generation;" and in another passage (Amos ii. 13) "Behold, I am pressed un-

der you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves;" and in another text, more strongly expressive of the divine hatred of sin than any other in the Bible (Genesis vi. 5, 6.) "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." These expressions, which are after the manner of men, must not be taken as if they implied any weakness or unhappiness in God; but they certainly prove that he is greatly displeased with sin, and especially with atrocious sinners; even as a parent, who is not only displeased at the disobedience and ingratitude of a son, but is also exceedingly grieved—grieved at his heart. Surely this should teach us to grieve for our own sins! But if such be the just resentment which a holy God feels when sinners rebel, how wonderful is his patience in delaying the deserved punishment! This is what we are called in our text to admire—"the riches of his gentleness, and forbearance, and long suffering."

That we may more clearly discern, and be more deeply affected with the patience of God, let us review some of those instances which are recorded in the sacred Scriptures, or which are still manifested in the world, and in ourselves.

1. God was pleased to give a specimen of his patience in his conduct towards the first human sinners—our first parents.

The great Creator had been liberal to his creature, man. He was filled and surrounded with good; there was nothing left him to wish for. He had all the liberty he could desire. There was no restraint laid upon him, save an easy abstinence from the forbidden tree; to enforce which, his Maker had declared that disobedience should be punished by death. But, ah! too soon did he yield to the force of

temptation; he saw, he took, he ate the fatal fruit. Soon did horror seize his soul, when his offended Maker approached, and approached, as he had reason to expect, to execute the dreadful threatening; for he had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But *did* he die? Did the thunderbolts of divine wrath strike him dead as he stood trembling in the thicket? No. Patience descends, for the first time, to this guilty world (which she has never since forsaken) and gives the condemned criminal a reprieve, a reprieve for 900 years. The sentence of death indeed was past, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;" but it was many centuries before it was executed; it was also accompanied with an intimation of redeeming mercy, by which, on believing, the worst part of the sentence should be remitted, for he was not to taste the "second death." What a living monument of patience did our venerable first father exhibit to all his numerous posterity, for almost a thousand years; every one of his pious descendants who beheld him would say, Behold the patience of God! The same patience was exercised towards the first-born man, who, sad to think, proved a murderer, a murderer of his brother, a murderer of his pious brother; and who had no other provocation to the horrid deed than the piety of his brother and his own wickedness. And might it not have been expected that, in answer to the cry of Abel's blood, vengeance should have struck the bloody Cain to the earth, and to hell? But here again behold the patience of God; he received an awful sentence, and became a fugitive and a vagabond, but he was allowed a season for repentance, and his life was secured by a special provision. Gen. iv. 9, 15.

2. Advancing in the history of the world, we find that, in less than 1400 years, "the earth was corrupt before God; the earth was filled with violence; for all flesh had corrupted his way." The

offended God determines to destroy the earth and its guilty inhabitants. "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven." But was this awful sentence immediately executed?" No: "his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Noah, who was himself to be preserved in the ark which he undertook to build, became a preacher of righteousness to his neighbours, that they also might repent, and escape the threatened punishment. On that disobedient race "the long suffering of God once waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." 1 Pet. iii. 20. Every stroke of the hammers, while that vessel was building, was a warning from God, and a fruit of his patience. How many, during that 120 years, repented and were pardoned, we are not informed,—we hope there were many, but they died in peace before the flood came: of those who were living on earth at the time, none were preserved from the waters but Noah and his family. O how little was the patience of God improved by that generation!

3. Observe the patience of God towards the idolatrous nations of the heathen world. Most hateful to God is the sin of idolatry. It is defrauding him of his glory; it is serving the creature instead of the Creator; it is transferring the honour due to the most high God to dead men, to images of men, to birds, and brutes, and reptiles, yea, to devils: but idolatry was not their only crime; their morals were as depraved as their worship was false; the greater part of them were "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; haters of God, disobedient to parents, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." This was their character. Yet, having sufficient light to know that these things were worthy of death, they persisted in the practice of them, and took pleasure in others who did them. Many, even

of their lawgivers, priests, and philosophers, by their institutions, examples, and presence, encouraged the people in the practice of these abominations, especially in celebrating the festivals of their gods. Most justly might the holy Governor of the world make a dreadful example of such egregious sinners, but he was patient and long suffering; "the times of this ignorance God winked at." Acts xvii. 30. He so overlooked as not severely to punish. Great was his patience.

4. The history of the Jews affords most striking proofs of divine forbearance. No nation upon earth was ever so highly favoured. For no other people did God so miraculously interpose: no country was ever indulged with so full a revelation of his will, with such tokens of his presence; to them, therefore, he might justly say, "*You* only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish *you* for all your iniquities." Those iniquities were indeed numerous and aggravated; they are charged with being "stiff-necked and rebellious," and they frequently fell into idolatry; to which crimes they added the persecution and murder of the prophets; yet he endured, with much long suffering, their ungrateful conduct. Forty years he endured their manners in the wilderness. It was long before he cast off the ten tribes of Israel; and before he sent Judah to Babylon. He restored them again to their own land, rebuilt their temple, and gave them another trial. They did not after this relapse into idolatry; but they lost the spirit of their religion, became formal and hypocritical, and worldly, and substituted the traditions of men in the place of the word of God; still his patience was prolonged, and to them he made the first offer of the gospel; nor did he "destroy their place and nation" till they had rejected both his Son and the apostles, and then wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

5. The patience of God appears in his giving

warning of approaching judgments. Thus, by Noah, he warned the old world; thus, by Jonah, he warned Nineveh: thus, by the prophets, was Israel warned, when captivity or war was at hand; and thus, our Lord himself warned Jerusalem and the Jews of their impending fate. In this manner he commanded his people to act in the conquest of Canaan; they were to summon a city before they attacked it; and in this manner he proceeds towards all his rebellious creatures. This was a principal branch of the prophet's office in ancient days, as expressed in the book of Ezekiel (ch. iii. 17.) "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore, hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." Awful admonition! but strong demonstration of the patience of God! In the same manner his long suffering is still displayed. The faithful ministers of the New Testament, no less than those of the Old, are still his watchmen. Bear with them, ye who hate not your own souls; do not be angry with them, because they tell you the truth, nor reproach them as ministers of wrath, when they warn you to flee from the wrath to come. They are your best friends; they only act according to their commission, and they imitate the apostle of the Gentiles, whose joy it was that he could appeal to heaven, that "he had not shunned to declare" to the Ephesians "the whole counsel of God," and that for three whole years he had not "ceased to warn every one of them, night and day, with tears." O consider these faithful warnings as tokens of the divine patience!

6. Once more, observe and admire the patience of God, in the reluctance with which he punishes

men, and in the moderation with which punishments are inflicted. His judgments are long delayed, as long as possible. He strikes not till it be absolutely necessary. He convinces the world that "judgment is his strange work," and that he "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Like a tender parent, necessity only urges him to chastise; and his language is, "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hos. iii. 8. And when he does punish, with what moderation is it done! "He stirs not up all his wrath." If he send into a country the famine, the plague, or the sword, all are not destroyed; some are spared, perhaps the greater part. At the worst of times it may be said, "He hath punished us less than our iniquities have deserved," and "in the midst of judgment he remembers mercy."

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We conclude with directing your attention to those practical lessons which the subject suggests.

1. *Let us take care that we do not abuse the patience of God.* This is a common and often a fatal fault. Because God is patient, sinners presume that he is unconcerned about their sins. Because he delays to punish, they conclude he never will. But this is to abuse his patience, and deny his veracity. Of this he complained in ancient times (Ps. l. 21.), "Because I kept silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;" but this vile abuse of his patience is so provoking to him, that he adds, "Consider this, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Wretched infatuation! Ungrateful treatment! Do ye thus requite the patience of God? Do ye thus despise—put a wrong con-

struction on his long forbearance? If so, mark the consequence, as declared in the verse after our text, "Thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." For, observe, his patience will have an end. This perfection will not, like most others, be continued to eternity. It is adapted only to the present time, and may end to-morrow, it may end to-night, yea, the next moment. Jesus Christ, foreseeing that the forbearance of God with Jerusalem was near a close, anticipates the dreadful day, and weeps when he cries, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes." Sad it is to think, that the goodness which leads to repentance should only serve to harden the heart, and embolden the sinner to persist in his sins. "Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Eccles. viii. 11. But, ah! what will be the consequence? The stroke long delayed will fall the heavier; the stream impeded in its course will increase its weight, and when once it breaks down the dam, will rush with such violence as to carry all before it: the debt that remains long unpaid will be demanded with interest upon interest, and that terrific threatening will be fulfilled (Prov. i. 24, &c.), "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind." To avoid this dreadful doom,

2. *Let us be concerned to improve his patience;* and our text directs us how to do it; "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,"—it gives opportunity for it; and it has a tendency to pro-

duce it. God might have cut you down in the first of those sinful actions which perhaps you have repeated hundreds of times. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead in the act of lying; and so have many others been, when uttering horrid imprecations. Zimri and Cosbi were slain when committing lewdness. Many have died in fits of drunkenness; and many persecutors have been snatched away before they could execute their wicked purposes, or soon after committing them. Why are we spared? Why more forbearance of us than others.? It may be (O that it may !) that God designs to melt our stubborn hearts by his kindness. Delay, then, no longer. Lift up your heart with me and say, God be merciful to me a sinner! I yield, O Lord, at length. I admire thy long suffering. I will tempt it no longer. O pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Wash me in the blood of the Lamb, and let thy good Spirit cleanse this foul heart, and make it new!

With what grateful admiration should believers reflect on the days that are past! The weeks, the months, the years, when God "waited to be gracious." Long did he stand at the door and knock, before it was opened; and in the meantime, how many a neighbour, a friend, a companion perhaps in iniquity, was snatched away; they were taken, but you were left — left till you heard the voice of the Son of God, and lived. O 'tis a heart-melting consideration, that God should spare you, as a man spareth his son, till he brought you up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings. O to grace what a debtor are you! Will you not henceforth sing his praise, admire his patience, and devote yourself to his service? How reasonable is it also that you should,

3. *Resemble the God of Patience.* We cannot have the same occasion for patience as he has, for we are not the rulers of the world; yet some occa-

sion for it we shall certainly find. Some injuries from our fellow-creatures we must expect; some degree of opposition even for Christ's sake. But the patience of God must make us patient. Good men have sometimes failed here. Even Moses, meek as he was, was so offended by the stubborn Israelites, that he angrily called them rebels. How unlike to God are those persons who are all in a flame at the slightest provocation, and meditate revenge under the pretence of a regard to honour. Even Christians themselves, in their families and in their churches, discover too little of this amiable and God-like grace: but true Christian love "suffereth long and is kind; beareth all things, and is not easily provoked." O let the patience of God engage you to possess your souls in patience! Remember the instructive parable, in which our Lord reproves the cruel creditor, whose immense debt of ten thousand talents had been freely forgiven, but who went out and seized by the throat his fellow-servant, who owed him only a hundred pence. How ungrateful, how inconsistent, how provoking was his conduct! Let us, however, "forbear one another in love, and forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us."

# SERMON LXXIII.

PSALM CXV. 3.

*But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

THE sovereignty of God is a sublime and difficult subject; yet very important and useful. Some of the divine perfections may, perhaps, appear to our selfish minds more amiable and attractive; but there is none in which our obedience and submission to him are more deeply concerned. Some of his attributes may seem more clearly to invite our confidence, and engage our affection; but as creatures in a state of subjection and trial, we are peculiarly interested in the divine sovereignty. It is necessary that we should be well established in this doctrine, that we may with sincerity pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" and that in the hour of adversity we may be able to say—"It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good."

Sovereignty signifies in general, Supremacy—the possession of supreme power—a right to govern without the controul of another; or, as in our text, a power to act as one pleases. This right is here ascribed to God, and can belong to no other in the same sense or degree. Puny mortals, conquerors, and tyrants, have frequently assumed this right, and have exercised it over a small portion of this little globe, and over a few millions of their fellow-mortals; and history has awfully shewn how unfit man is to be entrusted with sovereignty unrestrained; for great men are too often the subjects of an infernal sovereign, and slaves of their own bad passions; they are proud, ambitious, cruel,

selfish, and misinformed: therefore the common sense and common interest of mankind have led them to prefer limited monarchies, and to restrain human sovereignty within reasonable bounds: but the great, holy, and blessed God is incapable of any of these evils, and is perfectly qualified to exercise unlimited sovereignty over the whole universe, whatever worlds and beings it may contain, known or unknown to us.

Our present business shall be to establish and improve this great scriptural doctrine, that *the glorious God has a right to exercise dominion over all his creatures; and to do, in all respects, as he pleases.*

This right naturally results from his being the *Former* and the *Possessor* of heaven and earth. Who can dispute his right? He made all things; he supports all things; and is it not fit that he should govern all things? "For his pleasure they are, and were created;"—may he then not do with them as he pleases? especially when we consider that

*He is infinitely wise.* He perfectly knows all his creatures, all their actions, and all their tendencies. He is acquainted with the great plan which his own infinite mind projected before the beginning of time, and of which the wisest men know nothing, but that "he hath made all things for himself, to shew forth his own glory." As little children, however acute, cannot comprehend the movements of a large machine, or the operations of a manufactory, or the affairs of government, so we short-sighted mortals, whatever be our attainments, are unqualified to judge of the management of the universe; but we know that he is wise and should rejoice to think that "the Lord reigneth."

He is also *infinitely righteous.* His sovereign rule is not that of a haughty tyrant; but of a most righteous and holy Governor. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Yes; he cannot do wrong. His ways may be, to our apprehension,

mysterious; his paths may be "in the sea, and his footsteps in the mighty waters," so that we may not be able to trace him;" "clouds and darkness may be round about him," so that we may not clearly discern him; but "justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." It is the pride of man that arraigns the divine procedure at the bar of his reason, and concludes that this is right, and that is wrong, according as it agrees or disagrees with human notions and practices. God's ways and thoughts may differ widely from ours; but they are all right. "Just and true are all thy ways, O King of saints!"

*He is also infinitely good.* We may not always be able to discern the goodness of God. In particular instances, his dealings with men may seem severe; but we are bound to believe, from the essential goodness of his nature, that none of his actions are inconsistent with it. In human affairs, the imprisonment or execution of a criminal, may appear to an ignorant spectator a cruel action; but the intelligent observer knows that the general good of society is promoted by the punishment of evil doers. A child can hardly be prevailed upon to swallow a nauseous medicine, however necessary; but an adult person receives it as a benefit, calculated to restore his health and preserve his life; he will even submit to the amputation of a limb for the same purpose. Probably, those things in the course of Providence which seem the most severe, are equally necessary; and the destruction of whole cities or nations may be so, for aught we can tell: at least we may, with great propriety, say of God—

> "Good when he gives, supremely good,
> Nor less when he denies;
> E'en crosses, from his sovereign hand,
> Are blessings in disguise."

That the blessed God is not only perfectly qua-

lified to exercise a sovereign rule over the universe, but that he actually does exercise it, has always done so, and will do so to the end of time, is absolutely certain and undeniable, and is uniformly asserted in the Scriptures of truth. It is unnecessary to stop here, in order to produce formal proof; it will be sufficiently evident while we point out some of the distinct instances of his sovereignty:—In the creation of the world—in the fall of man—in the method appointed for his recovery—in the application of redemption to sinners—and in all the temporal concerns of men, prosperous or adverse.

1. Observe the sovereignty of God in the creation of the world.

Why was this world made at all? Why made just when it was? Why made *as* it was? Why not made many ages before? Why organized as it is? a sun in the centre!—several planets (how many?) revolving about it?—the earth in her present orbit?—the moon attending her?—why other planets nearer the sun,—others more remote? Why was this globe inhabited? and by such a creature as man, so like other beings in some respects, so unlike them in others? A thousand such questions might be asked. One answer suffices for them all —"For thy pleasure they are and were created." Other reason we know not, nor is any other necessary.

2. The sovereignty of God may be noticed in the awful event of man's apostacy.

Before the fall, his Maker entered into a covenant with him, not for himself alone, but for all his posterity in and with him, as their head and representative. If he should fulfil the condition of that covenant, abstaining from the forbidden tree, as the pledge of his obedience, all his posterity would be confirmed in the same state of happiness, and in the divine favour; if he transgressed, all his posterity would be involved in the consequences of that trans-

gression, and become liable to the same condemnation and misery with himself. Could all the posterity of Adam have been consulted, it is probable that all would readily have consented to this arrangement; but whether they would have approved or not, or whether men now approve or disapprove of this constitution of things, is of no manner of consequence. So God determined; and doubtless he determined rightly. He gave Adam sufficient power to maintain his integrity; but he left him free to fall. So his sovereignty appointed. Left to himself, he who could have stood, did fall, and by that fall

> "Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

3. The sovereignty of God is displayed in the method he has been pleased to appoint for the recovery of fallen man.

There was rebellion in heaven, as well as on earth. Angels rebelled, and were expelled from heaven—not *all* indeed; and why not all? The sovereign goodness of God preserved the "elect angels" (1 Tim. v. 21) from falling; the rest "are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day." But man, apostate man, became the object of divine compassion; and no sooner did he need a Saviour, than a Saviour was promised—a Saviour who should assume the nature that had sinned, and restore the offender and his (believing) posterity to a better paradise than Adam lost. But why not include angels? They were beings superior to man. Divine sovereignty passed them by; "for verily he (the Redeemer) took not upon him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham"—"he took flesh and blood, that he might die, and by dying, make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb. ii. 17, &c.

That this method of reconciliation should be fixed upon, we ascribe to the divine sovereignty. That he should save any of the fallen race—that his Son

should be the Saviour,—that in order to his being a Saviour he should be incarnate—be born of a virgin —be born where and when he was—be a poor man, and a man of sorrows—should speak, and act as never man did, yet be treated as never man was; and that he who was to give life to the world, should himself die—die a violent death—die on the infamous cross, and that his so dying should be considered and accepted by a holy and just God as a sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement for sin—that his blood should cleanse from all sin; and that, through faith in his blood, all sinners who believe should be freely, fully, and for ever justified, and entitled to everlasting life.—Such was the divine constitution; so God appointed in his sovereign pleasure; and therefore we conclude that this method of salvation is right and good, excellent and glorious, every way worthy of its divine Author, who will be eternally glorified by the whole intelligent universe for adopting it.

4. The sovereignty of God is no less displayed in the application, than in the provision of this great salvation.

The glorious gospel, which is "the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth," is sent to one place, and not to another. He has indeed authorized his disciples to proclaim his gospel "to every nation"—"to every creature;—and no small share of blame, it may be feared, attaches to the church, and especially to the ministers of it, that greater efforts have not been made in obedience to that authority: yet we cannot deny the exercise of divine sovereignty, in the unequal distribution of gospel light. In the days of the apostles, Macedonia was preferred to Bithynia; and doubtless the providence of God directed the steps of the first Evangelists, and of successive Missionaries. Some nations of the world are far more highly favoured than others. Many populous regions of Asia are destitute of a gleam of light, and others enjoy but

a very small portion of it. Almost the whole of Africa lies in midnight darkness: and the vast continent of America knew nothing of the gospel till within a few centuries. Of all countries, Great Britain has the greatest cause for joy and gratitude. Here, surely, the sovereign goodness of God will be gladly acknowledged—"He hath not dealt so with every land, praise ye the Lord."

And will not every individual, who has "tasted that the Lord is gracious," ascribe all the light, the faith, the love, the hope that he enjoys, to the sovereignty of God? That he was pleased to send his gospel to the place of your abode (while others are passed by): that he should so order the circumstances of time and place, that you should be brought to hear the joyful sound; and above all, that the eyes of your understanding should be enlightened, your heart softened and humbled, the Saviour revealed in you the hope of glory, and you enabled, perhaps, in the face of contempt and opposition, to own his cause and follow him fully; while probably those who heard the same sermons, and were placed in the same circumstances with you, remain in their natural state, and, like "Gallio, care for none of these things;" but despise and hate them, and speak all manner of evil of them and of you.—Now, to what will you ascribe the difference? Who maketh thee to differ from another? Was it your own superior wisdom and goodness? No; you will certainly say, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" that grace was freely bestowed and might justly have been withheld. Not unto me, O Lord; not unto me, but to thy name be the praise and glory of the saving change. Such was the language of our adorable Lord, when on earth, when the seventy disciples reported to him the success of their ministry. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even

so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21.

The sovereignty of God our Saviour is apparent in the constitution and ordinances of his church. He has appointed what officers should dispense his word, and superintend its concerns. He has appointed the first day of the week instead of the seventh, to be the Christian Sabbath, for he is "Lord of the Sabbath." He has ordained the preaching of his word, prayer, and praise, to be the stated branches of public worship. He has appointed Sacraments or external representations of spiritual blessings, and he has confined these to two in number, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the first of these to be the badge of discipleship, shewing, by the use of water, that his religion was intended for the purification of all his people; and by the bread and wine in the latter, that Christ crucified, whose death we therein remember and exhibit, is the food and support of every believer. That Christ thus appointed the ordinances of his worship in the church, is a high instance of his sovereignty, and every Christian is in duty and in love bound to submit to all his appointments.

5. The sovereignty of God is obvious in his disposal of the temporal affairs of men, whether as *individuals* or as *nations*.

*As individuals.* — Our parentage, the circumstances of our birth, the place, the time, are all arranged by the great Ruler. The powers we possess, of body and of mind; the degree of education we receive, and on which, frequently, so much, in after life, depends; the culture or the neglect of the mind; the connexions which we form, apparently the result, not so much of choice, as of what we call Accident, are all under the direction of Heaven; and so are all our concerns, whether we enjoy uninterrupted health and good spirits, or whether we drag on heavily with a sick body and a feeble mind; whether we forsake the land of the living at twenty

years of age, or are detained in it to seventy or eighty, depends on the divine pleasure, for Jesus hath "the keys of death and of the invisible world." In like manner, his sovereign pleasure allots the bounds of our habitations; the nature of our employment, in a superior or inferior station; and the degree of prosperity or failure, that shall crown our labours or disappoint our hopes. Every prudent and laborious tradesman is not always successful; "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." "Promotion," says the wisest of men, "cometh not from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South." Events, that contradict all probabilities, often take place, to shew man his dependence on a superior power; for sometimes, as we read in Hannah's song (1 Sam. ii. 8.) "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them."

The sovereignty of God should particularly be owned by the afflicted and distressed, who form a large proportion of human beings, man being "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." It is of great importance to know and remember what was wisely observed to patient Job, that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;" that is to say, afflictions are not the effect of chance, they are in the hand of God: and therefore it is added, as a piece of advice to Job,—"I would seek unto God, and unto God I would commit my cause."—I would submit to his rod, and seek relief from him. Even those events which seem to us *casual*, and as to the agents concerned in them, undesigned, are under the direction of heaven; so it appears from Exodus xxi. 12, 13, "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death: but if a man lie not in wait, but *God deliver him into his hand*, then I will

appoint thee a place whither he shall flee," that is, to the city of Refuge. This proves that nothing comes *by chance*, but the most casual events are under the control of divine sovereignty.

To the wicked, afflictions are intimations of God's holy displeasure against their sins, and solemn warnings to fly from the wrath to come; but to the children of God they are parental chastisements, the effects of tender love, and wisely directed for their good. The sovereign hand of the Almighty should be owned in both.

That sovereign hand is, perhaps, more visible in the affairs of nations; they rise and fall, flourish and decay, and the connexion between natural causes and effects may sometimes be plainly discerned; yet that the Ruler of the world directs and controls them is sufficiently evident, for in his hand are both the causes and the effects. This might be fully illustrated from the history of Israel, and other nations connected with them, from their first rise in the family of Abraham to their dispersion: a great part of the Old Testament might be adduced for this purpose, but time forbids. God was pleased himself to illustrate this before the eyes of Jeremiah, by the emblem of a potter, who, with the utmost ease, formed a vessel of the yielding clay, and as easily broke it, and formed it again into another vessel, "as seemed good to the potter to make it." "Cannot I do with you, O house of Israel, said the Lord, as this potter"—destroy a nation or erect an empire? Jer. xviii. The craft, the envy, the revenge, the ambition of men are often the occasions of wars, and fightings, and revolutions; the agents may be wicked men; but frequently they are the mere instruments of a holy and just God, in punishing an individual or a nation, ripe for ruin. The agent may be wicked, but God is righteous. "With him," said the wise and pious Job, "with him is strength and wisdom: the deceiver and the deceived are his. He leadeth counsellors away

spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bands of kings, or girdeth their loins with a girdle. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them." &c. Job xii. 16, &c. In this manner God displays, in every age, his sovereign dominion over the nations,—his management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, overruling their counsels, overpowering their efforts, and overcoming their opposition; and proving, to their confusion, that "in the thing wherein thay dealt proudly, he was above them." Exod. xviii. 11. And in nothing is this, his sovereign power, more conspicuous, than in producing great and good results from the evil actions of his creatures, as in the case of Joseph, whose glory in Egypt was the result of the envy and cruelty of his brethren, and of the lewdness and lies of Potiphar's wife. Their actions and intentions were bad, "but God meant them for good." The Sabeans and the Chaldeans pillaged Job, but the glory of God, as well as Job's greater prosperity, was ultimately promoted. Pharoah, King of Egypt, was a tyrannical oppressor of the children of Israel, who could proudly say, "Who is the Lord that I should obeyhim?" but to him God says, "In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." Exod. ix. 16. In a word, the greatest and most glorious event that ever took place in our world, the atoning death of Immanuel, was effected by instruments the most base and vile. It was by the "wicked hands" of the Jews, that Jesus "was crucified and slain;" but we are assured by St. Peter that even this was according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." The holy God is not the author, or abettor of the sins of men; it is impossible that he can concur in the moral evil of any human action; but we see that, in the exercise of his sovereign rule, he not only permits wicked men to perform bad actions, but by his infinite wisdom and power brings good

out of evil. The sinner is condemned, but God is righteous.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty shews us, that *ready obedience to all his precepts* is our reasonable service. Is God the rightful governor of the world?—are we his natural subjects? has he made known his holy will to us?—and shall we not cheerfully obey him? As our *Creator*, we ought to obey him;—as our *Preserver*, we ought to obey him; and especially as our *Redeemer* we ought to obey him. "I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage," said Jehovah to Israel; and then he proceeds to lay down his law for their conduct—"Thou shalt have no other gods before me," &c. Exod. xx. 2, 3. In like manner he speaks to us in the gospel, not from Sinai, but from Sion, "Because I am the Lord, and your God, and Redeemer, therefore are ye bound to keep all my commandments."

The great lesson enforced by this doctrine is, *Humble submission to all his righteous pleasure.* Is God the Sovereign of the world, infinitely wise, righteous, and good? Has he an undoubted right to do as he will with all his creatures? Then surely he has a right to do as he pleases with *me.* He is too wise to err; too good to be unkind. I welcome all his sovereign will, for all that will is love. He says to me in this painful, or in that bereaving providence, "Be still, and know that I am God;" and my submissive temper shall yield obedience. I will adopt the praiseworthy language of the most patient of men, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He will permit his suffering child to plead, as his only-begotten Son once did in his agony, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" but I hope he will strengthen me to add, with profound submission, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." Amen.

# SERMON LXXIV.

PSALM xxxiii. 5.

*The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.*

IN discoursing on the glorious perfections of God, his *goodness* must by no means be omitted; for, though all his perfections are his glory, yet this is particularly so called: for when Moses, the man of God, earnestly desired to behold a grand display of the *glory of Jehovah*, the Lord said, in answer to his petition, "I will cause all my *goodness* to pass before thee; thus intimating that He himself accounted his goodness to be his glory (Exod. xxxiv. 6); and it includes that mercy, grace, long-suffering, and truth, which are afterwards mentioned. When it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy;* when it bestows favours on the worthless, it is *grace;* when it bears with provoking rebels, it is *long-suffering;* when it confers promised blessings, it is *truth;* when it supplies indigent beings, it is *bounty;* and this is the principal view we shall now take of it. The *goodness of God* is a very comprehensive term; it includes all the forms of his kindness shewn to men, whether considered as creatures, as sinners, or as believers: but I purpose to consider the goodness, mercy, and love of God distinctly. All might, indeed, be comprehended in one word; but as these attributes are so amiable and encouraging, and as our happiness is so much concerned in them, it may be for our advantage to view each of them

separately; and though there should be some degree of sameness, or repetition, in our so doing, I trust it will not be a vain or tiresome repetition. I shall therefore take a view of the *goodness* of God, as it respects creatures; the *mercy* of God, as it regards sinners: and the *love* of God, as it relates to believers. Now, by the GOODNESS OF GOD we mean,

That disposition of the divine Being which always inclines him to render his creatures happy, as far as is consistent with his other perfections.

The goodness of God is generally distinguished into *Absolute* and *Relative*. By *absolute goodness* is meant that essential property of his nature which he had in himself from eternity, before any creatures were formed, and without regard to creatures. His *relative goodness* is that perfection exercised towards his creatures; it is his generous disposition to do them good, and make them happy. Both are included in that Scripture (Psalm cxix. 68.) *Thou art good—and doest good.* God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably good in himself; so that it may be truly said, *There is none good but one, that is God:* (Mark x. 18); none good in comparison of him; none good originally, absolutely, perfectly, immutably, like him. But it is his goodness as *imparted*, communicating good to his various and innumerable, creatures, which we are now to contemplate. For this purpose he made the world, and placed therein a variety of creatures, which might be capable of receiving his goodness in a variety of ways, according to the distinct capacities of their several natures; but especially man, a rational creature, capable of knowing his benefactor, and of glorifying him for his bounty. It is the goodness of God to *man*, chiefly, that we shall now consider.

1. Observe then, in the first place, the goodness of God to man, in the formation of his body, in the

powers of his mind, and in that state of holiness and happiness wherein he was originally placed.

The human body is indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made;" it cannot be surveyed without astonishment; every, limb, every sense, every faculty, bears the clearest marks of the beneficent hand which produced it! The outward form of man is evidently far superior to that of the brutes. The delicacy of his composition, his erect posture, his beautiful countenance, his capacities of action and of enjoyment, give him a vast pre-eminence above all other creatures on earth; and his supremacy over them is admitted almost by them all—so that with little difficulty they are brought to spend their lives in his service.

But it is in the powers of his mind;—in his possession of a thinking, reasoning, immortal principle, that we perceive his chief superiority. The brutes have some advantage above us, in their speed and in the quickness of their senses; but "the inspiration of the Almighty has given us understanding, and taught us more than the beasts of the field." Every one who reflects on his own powers, his perception, his imaginatiom, his judgment, his memory, must be sensible of their high value. These are sources of unspeakable enjoyment, usefulness, and happiness; affording a gratification, always at hand, and infinitely superior to the grosser pleasures of sense, which are often dearly purchased, which soon cloy, and, if irregularly indulged, are sure to destroy us. It is a wonderful privilege granted to man, that he is capable of knowing his God! and while all other creatures are merely passive subjects of his goodness, man can reflect upon the bounty of his Maker—can "taste and see that he is good," and give to him the glory due to his name. God has also made us *immortal.* Other creatures have but scanty sources of pleasure; they enjoy them but for a short season; they die and perish: but man is born to live for ever. He is to be the inhabitant

of another world; his days are to run parallel with those of God himself; and, if saved by grace, his happiness will be inconceivably great, and never, never terminate.

Look back also, and reflect on the goodness of God to man in his original state. He made man "in his own likeness, in his own image;" that is, in the image of his own wisdom, purity, and holiness, by which he was qualified to glorify his Maker on earth, and to enjoy superior bliss in his immediate presence in a future state. Surely, the goodness of God was wonderfully displayed in the formation of man! Indeed, the Creator himself, surveying all his wonderful and excellent works, and especially man, the master, and the master-piece of them all, pronounced the whole to be "good"—to be "very good!"

2. Consider also, the ample provision made for the comfort of man. The world was made *for* him: "The earth hath he given to the children of men." As man was made for the honour of God, so the world was made for the support and delight of man, in order to the due performance of his service to God. The sun and the moon were ordained to give him light; the grass is a beautiful carpet spread for his feet; the heavens are a splendid canopy stretched over his head; the trees afford him delicious food; the earth produces wholesome grain; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, furnish his table, in immense variety, with pleasant and nourishing food. His garments, whether for necessity or ornament, are borrowed from the innocent sheep, the silkworm, and the cotton-tree: the sturdy ox, and the generous horse, contribute their labour to lessen his toil, and enable him, with comparative ease, to cultivate the earth, and perform his journeys. The diversified beauties of nature,—the hills, the dales, the rocks, and rivers, and seas, delight his organs of vision: the songsters of the grove ravish his ears with their musical notes, and

the flowers of the garden regale his nostrils with their fragrant odours. "Lord! what is man, that thou art mindful of him!" "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

3. The goodness of God to man was discovered in placing him in so agreeable a state originally, and in giving him so holy and good a law. The commandment which he gave him was not grievous. No more was required of him, than what was written on his heart, and which he had full power to perform. Obedience was easy and pleasant to him; it was the condition on which his own happiness and that of all his posterity depended; and the threatening of death annexed was a farther instance of the goodness of God; because it was calculated to preserve him in his integrity, by the fear of ruin to himself and all his race.

4. The goodness of God is apparent in preserving the order of the universe, for the welfare of man. He who first made, still "upholds all things." The heavenly bodies perform, with the most astonishing punctuality, their appointed revolutions, any irregularity in which order might be fatal to the earth and to man; and a regular succession of the seasons is secured by the promise and providence of God. Hence we have "summer and winter, seed-time and harvest." "He visiteth the earth, and watereth it; he prepares the corn when he hath so provided for it; he blesseth the springing of the earth; he crowneth the year with his goodness, and his paths drop fatness; the little hills rejoice on every side; the pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." Even the inferior creatures are the objects of his care. "The young lions roar, and seek their meat from God." All animals "wait upon him, that he may give them their

meat in due season; that which he giveth them they gather; he openeth his hand, and they are filled with good." In a word, "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

5. To the same cause we must thankfully ascribe our defence against innumerable evils and dangers, seen and unseen. "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast!" Our greatest danger is from invisible enemies. What would evil spirits effect, were they permitted? Satan "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" we are therefore taught to pray, "deliver us from evil," or rather, "from the evil one." The malice of evil spirits is plain from the case of Job, whose character, property, family, health, and life, were assailed by him; and whose security Satan himself ascribes to the Almighty in those remarkable words, "Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about all that he hath?" The goodness of God is our shield and our defence.

Our security from wicked men is likewise from him. We too often see what wicked men would do, if they were permitted; but he sets bounds to their raging and cruel passions, as well as to the stormy billows of the ocean. "He stilleth the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people." Without this restraint, how would murders, adulteries, robberies, perjuries, and oppressions, prevail in the world! Men would become, as the prophet speaks, "like the fishes of the sea," destroyers of each other;—"like the creeping things which have no ruler over them." And this should make us thankful for the wholesome laws, and the just government, of the country in which we live. It is by the instrumentality of the magistrate that the place and order of society are preserved; without this there would be no safety to our persons or property,—the world would be like a howling wilderness, infested by lions, and tigers, and serpents: but the "shields of the

earth belong to God"—they are the effects and instruments of his goodness; and let this be acknowledged with gratitude by every man, "sitting under his vine and his fig-tree, without fear."

Let us, in like manner, ascribe to his goodness that social order and good behaviour which generally prevail, in this and in other civilized countries, and which contribute so much to the comfort of life. There are some faint traces of the moral law upon the hearts of men in general; and we owe still more to the common influence of Christian truth, Christian worship, and Christian example, upon multitudes of persons who, it may be feared, are not real and serious Christians: but, considering man as a fallen creature, we ought to be thankful that the state of things is no worse than it is, and ascribe to his goodness whatever is moral, decent, peaceable, and commendable among men:—the kindness of parents, the dutifulness of children, the submission of servants, the fidelity of husbands and wives, the obedience of subjects, and the justice of magistrates, all are the effects of divine goodness.

Our daily exemption from surrounding evils is also the fruit of divine goodness. The "earth was cursed for man's sake;" and Sin opened the floodgates of Misery. That we are preserved, so generally as we are, and for many years together, from painful, loathsome, and dangerous diseases; from storms and tempests, lightning, earthquakes, and inundations, should be the theme of our daily praise. Nor should we lose sight of those seasonable alleviations, which are afforded to the afflicted. The arts of medicine and surgery, the provision of soothing and healing remedies, the hospitals, infirmaries, and dispensaries, which abound in our land; and (which are some of its most beautiful ornaments) the parish relief provided by our humane laws, so superior to the precarious charity of other countries; and the innu-

merable societies established among us, for the instruction of poor children, the visitation of the sick, the care of the insane, the blind, the deaf and dumb, and other benevolent purposes; all these benefits, through whatever channel they flow, must be traced to their original source, and that source is the goodness of God.

6. To form a just estimate of the divine bounty, let it be remembered that it is bestowed upon unworthy and sinful creatures. God, who is infinitely holy, and who hates sin with a perfect hatred, might justly withdraw from his rebellious creatures all the tokens of his favour. This is in fact, "the manner of men." Men are used to feed their prisoners with "the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction;" and, "if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?"—But the great and blessed God treats his bitterest enemies with kindness; and the generous conduct which he recommends to us is no other that that which is constantly observed by himself:—"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." It is thus that he melts down his obdurate foes, and subdues them with the arms of love. Those therefore, who have entertained a just view of themselves as guilty sinners, have expressed their admiration of the divine bounty in the strongest terms. Thus Jacob, when surveying the interpositions of Providence in his favour, exclaims, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies!" and David, reflecting on the beneficence of Heaven, in raising him to a crown, cries, "Who am I, O Lord God, that thou shouldest bring me hitherto!"

Thus we have taken a slight view of the goodness of God to man, in his original formation;—in the powers of his body and mind;—in the ample provision made for his support and comfort;—in the preservation of the world;—his deliver-

rance from innumerable evils,—and his enjoyment of innumerable blessings. All these are great, unspeakably great: but there is yet another display of his goodness which exceeds any one of these; which exceeds them all put together; which exceeds all the powers of language, all the stretch of conception—*it is the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ*—concerning this it is said—said by the lips of the Redeemer himself—"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "There is more of his bounty," says an eminent writer, "expressed in that one sentence, than there is in the whole volume of the world. It is an incomprehensible word—*So:* a word that all the angels in Heaven cannot analyze. Few comment upon, or understand the dimension of this *so*. In creation, he formed an innocent creature of the dust of the ground; in redemption he restores a rebellious creature by the blood of his Son. It is greater than the goodness manifested in creation, in regard of the difficulty of effecting it; in regard of its immense cost; in regard of man's desert of the contrary: it was greater goodness than was shewn to the angels who stood,—infinitely greater than was granted to those who fell." But as this must be the subject of a future discourse, we shall not now enlarge upon it. For the present, let us endeavour to make some practical use of the doctrine of divine goodness.

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1. *Let God be praised for his goodness.* This is the pepper-corn of acknowledgement, which he demands, and expects, of us; and how frequently does the writer of the 107th Psalm, in which the displays of divine bounty are enumerated, exclaim, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!" Alas! that ungrateful man should need to be repeatedly urged to this reasonable and pleasant duty!

Let us not be satisfied with a *general* view of the goodness of God. Let every one of us review the blessings of God to *him* in particular. "Bless the Lord, O *my* soul, and all that is within *me*, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O *my* soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all *thine* iniquities; who healeth all *thy* diseases; who redeemeth *thy* life from destruction, who crowneth *thee* with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Let each record his own history, and trace the streams of mercy in his infancy, childhood, and youth: in the tender cares of parents, now perhaps numbered with the dead; in the advantages of early education, and salutary restraint; in preservation from the disorders of infancy; in deliverance from some threatening danger. How many thousand times has thy table been spread with the good creatures of God! How many refreshing and comfortable meals hast thou enjoyed! —how many thousand nights of safe and comfortable repose! How often has he restored thee from pain and sickness! What favourable turns took place in thy affairs! But time would fail to enumerate all his benefits: O forget not all his benefits!

2. *If such be the goodness of God how base is the ingratitude of man!* So God himself complains. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The goodness of God is awfully abused by sinners. The goodness of God should excite the love of our hearts, and secure the obedience of our lives: but how is it perverted by sin! how is it abused to the purposes of luxury, of lewdness, of intemperance, of sabbath-breaking! How do men, like Jeshurun of old, wax fat, and kick against God; and thus, the bounties of Providence are turned into weapons of rebellion against their Giver, and instruments of destruction to themselves. "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" Is it thus, that "thou despisest the riches of his

goodness, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" But this cannot be done with impunity. God observes with a severe eye, and he will revenge with a heavy arm, the abuses of his kindness.

3. On the contrary, *Let the goodness of God attract our hearts*, and engage them to adore, love, obey, and trust, in him. "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!" He is infinitely worthy to be supremely loved. Among men, the shadow of his goodness excites our esteem, and "for a good man, possibly some would even dare to die." But the Supreme Good demands our supreme regard. Let his name be adored;—let his worship be our delight;—let his praise be our employ;—let his commandments be our rule;—let his goodness encourage us to pray;—let his goodness invite us to trust in him, for "the Lord is good; he is a strong-hold in the day of trouble." He who gave us Christ, will withhold no good thing from them that love him. "O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusteth in him!" "O praise the Lord, for he is good; sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant!"

4. *Let us imitate him.* Let us endeavour, in our humble measure, to resemble God in the goodness of his disposition, and to imitate him in acts of kindness to our fellow-men. Sufficient objects will ever surround us: "the poor ye have always with you, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good." "To do good, then, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." For this purpose divine Providence permits an inequality among men: some have too little; others have somewhat to spare; and it is a high privilege conferred upon any, that they are able and willing to help their neighbours. We ought to remember the saying of our Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive:" and is is God-like to imitate our Saviour, who "went

about doing good." Nor let our favours be confined to the deserving. Our Lord's direction is this: "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "Let us, therefore, as we have opportunity, do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Finally. *Look forward to the heavenly world*, when the goodness of God will be fully displayed, and perfectly enjoyed. Here, we taste that the Lord is good; but it is only a taste,—the feast is reserved for the future and eternal state: and if the foretaste of his goodness on earth be so sweet, what will the complete fruition of it be? If, even now, the believer's peace be a "peace passing all understanding;" if the believer's joy be a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," what may be expected in that better world, where "God himself shall dwell with his people and be their God?" When "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain." Rejoice then in hope of this glory of God; for "in his presence there is fulness of joy,—at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore!"

# SERMON LXXV.

PSALM LXII. 12.

*Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth Mercy.*

IN our meditations on the divine perfections, we proposed to take a distinct view of the *goodness*, the *mercy*, and the *love* of God; for though they are sometimes taken for each other, and in some measure included in each other, yet a separate consideration of them may be useful, especially as God's goodness relates to his creatures in general, and as *creatures:* Mercy relates to those only of his creatures which are *sinful*, and therefore *miserable;* and his love signifies the delight and complacence of his heart, in the special objects of his choice. We have already spoken of the divine goodness; let his *mercy* be the subject of our present discourse; and may we entertain such a view of this amiable perfection, that we may learn to "hope in his mercy," and to "glorify him for his mercy." That which we shall now endeavour to prove and illustrate is, that

MERCY TO MISERABLE SINNERS is a distinguishing attribute of the blessed God.

Mercy, among men, is a soft and tender affection, arising in the mind on the view of human misery, accompanied by a desire to afford relief; and though we ought not to ascribe to God any painful feelings, any passion or agitation, grief or trouble, such as we feel, yet we may consider mercy in God as his disposition and readiness to relieve

his miserable creatures. Our text asserts, that Mercy "*belongeth* to him," or is "*within him:*" that is, it belongs to his nature; it is inseparable from him; it belongs to him more than to any other being; so that nothing in his creatures deserves the name, compared with his mercy; for he is "the Father of mercies," and "he delighteth in mercy." It is his glory,—for when Moses (as mentioned in a former discourse) desired to see his glory, he gratified him by proclaiming his names and titles, the first of which was "The Lord God, *merciful* and gracious—keeping *mercy* for thousands;" and this forms the chief ground of confidence and trust in him, as appears from this psalm. David had found, by experience, that confidence could not safely be reposed in man; but finding that God was possessed of almighty power, and also of infinite mercy, he declares his resolution to trust in him alone.

As mercy relates to *misery*, we must necessarily consider the mercy of God as extended to miserable man,—to man in his fallen, sinful, helpless state, as a sinner; for, as "the whole need not the physician, but they who are sick;" so none will seek or prize the mercy of God, but those who, in truth, feel, and confess themselves to be "miserable sinners." The Scriptures uniformly represent man as a depraved creature, having lost that original rectitude in which he was created. He is now so depraved, so "very far gone from original righteousness, that he is of his own nature inclined to evil." He is also actually guilty: charged with innumerable offences against God's holy law, in thought, word, and deed; "for what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." Rom. iii. In this state, man must needs be miserable; for he is exposed to the righteous anger of an offended God; the wages of sin is death;" and it is, in-

deed, "a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God." This is the real condition of every man, whether he be sensible of it or not. If he be not sensible of it, his case is so much the worse; his danger is increased by his ignorance of it, for of course he will not seek for mercy; if it be known, then will the mercy of God be the chief desire of his soul, and his sincere prayer will be, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

That "mercy belongeth unto God," is the only truth that can support and cheer the real penitent. This is the relief of which the prophet speaks (Ps. cxxx. 1—3) where the deep distress of some convinced sinners is thus described: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand! but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared: let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

It seems to be a principal design of the word of God, and especially of the gospel of Christ, to satisfy the penitent soul, that "mercy belongeth unto God." Without these gracious assurances, the self-condemned sinner would be ready to despair; for it is no uncommon thing for those who have just views of the holiness and justice of God, and of the extent and aggravations of their own sins, to fear that their iniquities are too great to be pardoned, and that there is no help for them in God. The tempter also, who "goeth about seeking whom he may devour," and who prevails upon many to neglect the mercy of God, as scarcely needing it, frequently suggests to those who have lately become religious, that there is no mercy for them. But the gospel provides a sufficient antidote against despair; assures us that God is "rich in mercy to all that call upon him;" that "if the wicked man forsake his ways, he will have mercy upon him; he will abundantly pardon."

The grandest, the most affecting, the most satisfactory evidence of the divine mercy, appears in the person, character, sufferings, and death of the Son of God; for it might be said, How can God be *just*, if he be *merciful?* Is he not infinitely holy? Does he not hate sin most intensely? Has he not threatened to punish it with everlasting death? And is he not true to his threatenings? How then can the honour of his justice be maintained, if mercy be shown to the guilty sinner? This objection is reasonable. This inquiry is important. And the question could never have been resolved, had not God himself given the answer. The gospel now informs us, that "Mercy and Truth meet together: Righteousness and Peace embrace each other." "The mercy of God is now exercised without prejudice to his justice, because justice received full satisfaction in the death of Christ, the sinner's surety; so that there is justice in punishing the sin, and mercy in relieving the sinner. The sin is punished by justice, in the Surety; and pardoned by mercy, in the sinner; so that God is just without impairing the honour of his mercy, and merciful without invading the rights of his justice."

This shows with what propriety Jesus Christ bears the name of "MERCY;" for when Zacharias praised God on the birth of John, the harbinger of Christ, he cries, "Blessed be God, for he hath visited and redeemed his people!—to perform the MERCY promised to our fathers." Luke i. 72. Christ was the mercy promised from the beginning; the mercy of all mercies, the matchless, the invaluable, the unspeakable mercy—the greatest and best gift that God himself could bestow on a fallen world; for he is the medium of all divine communications with man; the great, the only channel, through which his mercy flows to the guilty children of Adam.

That we may the better conceive of the nature

and extent of the divine mercy, let us attend to some of its properties.

1. *It is free and sovereign.* Mercy, indeed, is essential to his nature, and inseparable from it: we cannot conceive of God but as being merciful; yet the exercise of his mercy is free and sovereign; it is regulated by his will and wisdom; and bestowed in such a way as is consistent with his infinite justice and holiness, and a due regard to the authority of his law, and the honour of his government. Wherever it is bestowed, it is freely bestowed; none can say they deserve mercy. Some ignorantly talk of "making themselves worthy of the mercy of God, by their repentance and reformation;" but this is to turn mercy into debt; and to set up merit is to destroy mercy. It is plain that all sinners do not obtain mercy; many neglect it; many live and die wholly careless about it, their hearts being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin: if any therefore obtain mercy, it is from God who gives the desire, inspires the prayer, and leads the soul gladly to receive it through the hands of the Mediator. God himself declares the sovereignty of his mercy, saying to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion: so, then (St. Paul concludes) it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Rom. ix. 15, 16. Indeed, that apostle was himself a marvellous instance of the freedom and sovereignty of divine mercy, which he frankly owns; for "I" says he, "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy." He calls himself "the Chief of Sinners;" but he was one of those "vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory," in which God was pleased "to make known the riches of his glory," that is, of his mercy: and this leads us to observe—

2. That *it is rich and exceedingly abundant.* It is worthy of the infinite Being who bestows it. We read in Scripture of "great mercy,"—"abundant mercy,"—"tender mercy,"—and "manifold mercies." God is said to be—"rich in mercy,"—"plenteous in mercy,"—and "to keep mercy for thousands." There is a fulness of mercy in God that is inexhaustible; riches of mercy that cannot be counted; multitudes of mercies which cannot be numbered. Who can number the objects of mercy? Who can recount the mercies that every one of them has received? So that each of them may adopt the pious words of the Psalmist, "Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." Psalm xl. 5. And if such be the amount of mercies received by one individual, what must be the total sum of those received by a whole world! This has been the anchor of hope to myriads, who must else have perished in despair. This encouraged Moses to plead in behalf of Israel, when their destruction was threatened (Numb. xiv. 17.) "And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is long suffering and of great mercy, &c.—Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy: and the Lord said, I have pardoned, according to thy word." In like manner, encouragement is offered to the almost desparing penitent (Ps. cxxx. 7.); "Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is *plenteous* redemption."

3. Let us add, that this mercy of God is *effectual*—effectual for the complete relief, and perfect salvation of those who obtain it. Mercy, in man, is often ineffectual: it is merely pity and compas-

sion; it looks, and sighs, and offers words of sympathy and condolence, or pours forth prayers to the Father of mercies; but the case is too aggravated, the object is too far gone, to admit of relief from human hands. The mercy of God is accompanied with infinite power; and there can be no perplexity so complicated, no danger so imminent, no distress so deep, in which his merciful hand cannot afford effectual relief. "Give us help from trouble, O God, for vain is the help of man:" "Thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds." Psalm cviii. 4, 12.

4. *The mercy of God is comprehensive*—that is, it includes, or is connected with, every other desirable good. The soul that requests it may say, "O *satisfy* us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." The blessing of pardoning mercy comes not alone; it is the first link in the golden chain of salvation; connected with all the rest, and insuring to the happy possessor grace and glory; for "no good thing will be withholden from the objects of mercy." "He that spared not his own Son," (the chief mercy,) the channel of all other mercies, "but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" This shews the unspeakable value of mercy.

5. *It is perpetual.* It always resides in God; in every age of the world he continues to display it; and wherever it is once bestowed, it shall never be withdrawn. In a psalm of praise, much used in the Jewish church, this attribute of God is peculiarly celebrated, and the perpetuity of divine mercy is repeatedly declared. Twenty-six times in that Psalm it is said, *His mercy endureth for ever.* Ps. cxxxvi. This was the chorus of a spiritual song, in which the various blessings of creation and providence are recited, on account of all which it is said, "O give thanks unto the

Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!"

Indeed, it has been the same in all ages of the world. All men have needed it, and millions have obtained it. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and all the patriarchs and prophets; the penitents to whom John the baptist preached; the apostles and disciples of our Lord; and all believers from that day to this — all have sought, obtained, and praised God for his mercy. How richly was Mercy displayed in and by the Lord Jesus Christ! HIMSELF the chief mercy; Mercy was incarnate in him. It was Mercy that brought him down from the throne of glory, and induced him to dwell in a tabernacle of clay; it was Mercy that led him to become a poor, despised man, and to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; it was Mercy that nailed him to the cross, and laid him in the tomb; and he has risen to the throne of universal empire, with his heart as full as ever of mercy to sinful man. In the high office he sustains, as a priest upon his throne, he forgets not the miseries of man: "for we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities." He who, on earth was tempted in all points as we now are, still retains a sympathetic heart; and is as ready to pity and relieve the poor sufferer as when, himself a traveller on earth, he went about doing good, exercising compassion, instructing the ignorant, healing the sick, and comforting the mourner. Having therefore such an high priest, "Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

And, blessed be God, this mercy once bestowed, shall never be withdrawn. "The gift and callings of God are without repentance." Were the objects of mercy left to themselves, to the deceitfulness of sin, and to the wiles of the tempter, they would

soon forfeit every blessing, and wander irrecoverably from God; but he who had mercy "because he would have mercy," has engaged by covenant, to "put his fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from him;" they shall therefore persevere in the good way of faith and holiness, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;" then the final manifestations, fruits, and effects of his mercy shall appear, when a complete period shall be put to sin and sorrow, and his people shall enter into his glory, and sit down with him on his throne. Then, with an emphasis before unknown, the joyful song shall be shouted by myriads of voices, "O praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!"

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And now, let us take care to improve, to practical purposes, this encouraging attribute of the divine Being. Does mercy belong to God? *O let us take care to seek it in time!* Do we not *need* it? Are we not very justly styled, "Miserable sinners?" Only "fools make a mock at sin." All thinking and serious persons will readily admit that they are sinners; and, as such, that they need mercy. But are our hearts affected with this conviction?—deeply affected?—durably affected? Some slight and transient thoughts of needing mercy, most men have at times, especially in the hour of affliction, and in the apprehension of death; but they soon pass off. No use is made of them. They do not lead to fervent prayer for mercy; and the general notions that some men have of mercy are sadly abused. They take encouragement to continue in sin, because they think that God is merciful, and that they may obtain mercy whenever they please. But let such persons know, that this presumption is exceedingly displeasing to God. As he is infinitely merciful to penitent sinners, who are inclined to forsake their sins; so is he infinitely just to take vengeance on

hard-hearted and impenitent transgressors, who presume upon his mercy. He hath said (Ps. lxviii. 21), "God shall wound the head of his enemies and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses;" and (Ps. lix. 5), "He will not be merciful to any wicked (or impenitent) transgressors." Again, he saith of him who cries, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart—the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord shall smoke against that man." Deut. xxix. 20. Beware, then, of abusing mercy; and let not the present moment be neglected. To-morrow may be too late. "Now is the accepted time. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Hereafter the door will be shut, and many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able. When God had shut Noah into the ark, there was no refuge for the drowning multitudes, who refused his calls to repentance. But now he saith, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. Only turn to God through Christ, and beg him to help you to do it. If you turn to the Lord he will have mercy upon you. It is his own word. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall have mercy." Prov. xxviii. 13. If you will not come to Christ, you will not, cannot, have life; but coming to him, "you shall in nowise be cast out," but obtain mercy, and "the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you from all sin."

*The mercy of God affords great encouragement to prayer.* In the temple of Solomon there was a *Mercy-seat*—this was the cover of the Ark, sprinkled with the blood of atonement, towards which all who offered up their petitions at the hour of prayer, turned their faces. Towards this seat of mercy the penitent publican looked (in spirit at

least) when he presented that humble but successful petition, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" We too have "a throne of grace," sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, to which we are kindly invited with confidence to approach, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." A persuasion that God "is rich in mercy" to all who call upon him, will inspire us with holy boldness. This will furnish us with the Psalmist's plea, "Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgments!" Again, he pleads, "Deal well with thy servant, according to thy mercy;" or, as another eminent believer pleaded, "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies." Dan. ix. 18.

Does mercy belong to God? *Then let humble believers trust and not be afraid.* Think highly, think largely of divine mercy. "He will *abundantly* pardon." He will *readily* pardon. His thoughts are not as man's contracted thoughts,—his ways are not as man's limited ways; but superior, as the heavens are above the earth. Enlarge, then, your views of the mercy of God. Cherish extended thoughts of his goodness: and say, with the Psalmist, "I will hope in thy mercy;" "I trust in the mercy of the Lord for ever;" and this will induce you to

*Thank God for his mercy.* Look back and consider how much you owe to mercy! How many dangers have you escaped! how many deliverances experienced! how many benefits received! Reflect on his *preventing* mercies; how many sins were you prevented from committing!—his *providing* mercies; how constantly hath he supplied your returning wants!—his *restoring* mercies, recovering you from the very borders of the grave! but, above all; think of his *pardoning mercies!*—how hath he "multiplied to pardon" your renewed and multiplied transgressions! O then "Praise

the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!" "let the redeemed of the Lord (especially) say so, and add, "How precious are thy thoughts (of mercy) unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more than the sand." And when you reflect upon this vast profusion of mercies, reflect also on your total unworthiness of them, of any of them. What God has done for you was not only *without* merit, but *contrary* to it. So far were you from deserving any favour, that you deserved his anger; he might not only have withheld his blessings, but he might justly have punished your transgressions.

Forget not then to make some grateful return for his favours. "They are new every morning." Let your praises be as frequently renewed. Offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and in the spirit of the patriarch Jacob, who had a long experience of the divine favour, say, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies!"

Finally, *Let us imitate divine mercy.* They who have obtained mercy, should certainly shew mercy. Such persons can never be covetous, hard-hearted, cruel, or oppressive. Shall he, to whom ten thousand talents have been forgiven, seize his brother by the throat for a few pence? It is impossible. If you forgive not men their trespasses, it is certain that you are not forgiven. But, on the contrary, Christians, "Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if a man have a quarrel against any. Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Such is the scriptural direction to those who have received mercy; and this will be the best evidence of having received it; for thus said he, who will be our Judge, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!"

# SERMON LXXVI.

2 Cor. xiii. 14.

*And the* Love *of God be with you all.*

THESE words are a part of the benediction usually pronounced at the close of public worship in Christian congregations. They are the words of St. Paul, in the conclusion of his second epistle to the church at Corinth, by which he expresses his best wishes on their behalf; as if he had said, "May the perpetual favour of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the constant and peculiar love of God the Father, and the most abundant communication of the Holy Spirit, in his gifts and graces, be with you, and remain with you, even with all the members of the church of Corinth!" "It is with great reason," says an eminent divine, "that this comprehensive and instructive benediction is pronounced just before our assemblies for public worship are dismissed; and it is a very indecent thing to see so many quitting them, or getting into postures of removal, before this short sentence can be ended."

That this excellent and desirable privilege, which St. Paul so fervently wished might be enjoyed by the Corinthian Christians, may be ours also, let us make it the subject of our devout meditations at this time; and "may the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit!" But how difficult is it to conceive aright of the love of God! When we contemplate the firmament, and survey the starry heavens, we are constrained, from a sense of our own insignificance, to exclaim, "Lord! what is man, that thou art

mindful of him!" The condescensions of divine Providence are also truly wonderful; but the special love of God to sinful man, as displayed in their everlasting salvation, is beyond all description;—it "passeth knowledge!"

Love, among mortals, is that affection of the human heart which inclines us to take delight in a chosen object, and to seek the good and happiness of that object. The love of God is that holy affection by which he condescends to take a pleasure in his chosen people, to confer special favours upon them, kindly to accept their persons and services, and to make them eternally happy. That such is the love of God to his church, is abundantly evident from the testimonies of his word, and from innumerable facts. Take a few of his own declarations.

He was pleased to select the posterity of Abraham from among all other nations, and to treat them with distinguished attention: concerning which he says (Deut. vii. 6—8), "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth: the Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people); but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers:" and (in Deut. x. 15), "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people." It is also said (Ps. lxxviii. 68), "He chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved." It is written in another place (Ps. cxlvi. 8), "the Lord loveth the righteous." Particular persons are also described as the objects of divine love—"Jacob have I loved;" and our Saviour said to his disciples, "The Father himself loveth you."

But it is not by *words*, merely, that God has

manifested his love (though there is no difference between *his* professions and practices, as there too often is among men): he has evinced his love by the most valuable gifts, by the most generous and benevolent actions.

1. *God, in his infinite love, has given us his Son, his own, his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.*

Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a peculiar sense; in a much higher sense than any other being. Angels are called sons of God—Adam was the son of God;—believers are also the sons of God; but Christ, in an infinitely higher sense, is the Son of God. He is called his *only-begotten* Son, which surely implies that he is partaker of the same *divine nature* with his Father. Jesus Christ had a being before he made his appearance in this world. God is therefore said to *send* his Son into the world. And the acknowledgement of this was reckoned by St. John an important branch of the true Christian faith; for says he (1 John iv. 2), "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is *come in the flesh*, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; this is that spirit of *Anti-Christ*—(that is, *against* Christ) which is already in the world." If we compare this expression, *Christ's coming in the flesh*, with the first chapter of St. John's gospel (verses 1st and 14th) we shall find that it affords a proof of the divinity of our Saviour; for the apostle there says, "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God:" he also says (ver. 14th), "The WORD *was made flesh*, and dwelt among us." Christ, then, the Son of God, who *came in the flesh*, and *was made flesh*, or became man, is a divine Person, "the WORD, who was with God (the Father) and was God;" and being now man also, is God the Son—"Immanuel—God with us."

Here, then, is the most astonishing display of

divine love!—"herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv. 10. Well might St. Paul exclaim, "Thanks be to God, for his *unspeakable* gift!"

The degraded state of man, on whom this gift was bestowed, wonderfully enhances the love which bestowed it; for, "when we were yet sinners, Christ" was born—lived, and "died for us." How deplorably is man fallen! what a horrible mixture of the brute and the fiend is exhibited in many of the children of Adam! Look at the frightful, but faithful picture, drawn by St. Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans —a picture which too nearly resembles thousands still. Behold a rebel universe—our species up in arms against their God! See how men are "haters of God"—their carnal minds full of enmity against him; they reject his authority; they trample on his laws; they devote themselves to brutal lusts, depraved appetites, drunkenness, lewdness, unnatural vices, cruelty, oppression, murder:—and yet, hear it, O heavens! give ear and be astonished, O earth! for such, even for such vile and sinful rebels, God gave his only-begotten Son!

The love of God, in this gift, appears to be still more wonderful, when we consider the deep humiliation to which he was subjected. To have united the divine nature with humanity in any form, in the highest form, or under any circumstances, even the most glorious, would have displayed a condescension which can have no name, no parallel; but for the Son of God to submit to abject poverty; to live a life of constant self-denial; to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; to bear with the vilest indignities and insults, and those in return for innumerable acts of kindness, and, to complete the scene, to be tried as a malefactor, to be unjustly condemned, to be barbarously mangled by cruel scourges, to

be nailed like a criminal slave to the cross, there to agonize and to die,—and all this for guilty rebels!—Oh, it is astonishing!—no words of mortals can describe, no hearts of mortals can duly conceive of that divine love which is the source of all this.

> "Let all the world fall down and know
> That none but God such love could show!"

2. *Another method by which the love of God is manifested is in the gift of his Word,—his Gospel, by which we come to know his love; for without this, even the gift of his Son would have been of little avail.*

He was pleased to dart into the minds of his prophets and apostles a ray of supernatural light. At sundry times and in divers manners he spake unto the fathers by the prophets; and to Jesus Christ they all bear witness; they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; and, when all that they predicted had been accomplished, he inspired holy men to write the history of his birth, teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection, in what we call the Gospels. Others were equally inspired to write epistles to the first Christians, explaining at large the nature of that salvation which he had procured; the faith by which it becomes ours; the hope that we are warranted to indulge, and the holy temper and conduct which all believers must discover. "To *us* is the word of this salvation sent!" Let us prize it, according to its inestimable value; let us bind it to our hearts; let it be our meditation day and night; let it be sweeter to our taste than honey and the honeycomb, and more valuable than the gold of Ophir. It is the gift of divine love!

3. *Nor is the gift of the Holy Spirit less necessary than the gift of the Saviour himself, for, without his enlightening and renewing influences, we cannot sa-*

*vingly know or receive him.* His office is "to glorify Jesus;" for which purpose "he takes the things of Christ and sheweth them to us;" and God is said to give us his Spirit, "that we may know the things which he hath freely given us." So necessary are his influences, that without them no man can say in faith and in sincerity, "Jesus is the Lord." So necessary was it for the Spirit to descend on the church, that Christ said, "It is expedient for me to go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you;"—"and when he is come he will guide you into all truth." Yea, so necessary is this gift, and the reception of it, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

4. *The love of God is farther displayed in the forgiveness of sins.*

Among men an enemy usually resents a great offence, aggravates its evil, and meditates revenge; but love is rather grieved than angry when an injury is committed; is disposed to pardon, and, perhaps, seeks an occasion to be reconciled to the offender. Such, and infinitely more, is the condescending love of our offended God. He who could, at any time, and by any means, take the deserved vengeance, stoops to send his messengers to assure us of his friendly disposition towards us; warns us of the danger of persisting in our rebellion; and "in Christ's stead they beseech us to be reconciled to him." This readiness to forgive he has been pleased most pathetically to display in the charming parable of the Prodigal Son. There, the father of the once licentious youth is represented as beholding with compassion his forlorn, his penitent, and returning son, while yet a great way off, and running, with eager haste, to receive and embrace him! Affecting emblem of divine love! Such is the readiness with which the Father of mercies will still receive all who forsake their sins, and return to him by Jesus

Christ. "Verily, there is joy in Heaven over every sinner that repenteth," over every sinner that is pardoned; and in every such instance the love of God is glorified.

5. *God commendeth his love to us still more, in making the most abundant provision for our comfort and happiness in the present world.*

As parents are strongly attached to their children, and with pleasure provide them with food, and raiment, and education, and portions, so our heavenly Father kindly receives pardoned sinners into his family, and puts them amongst his children. "Behold!" saith St. John (observe it with the highest admiration), "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Behold what provision he hath made for our souls! He gives us his holy Sabbaths, his blessed Bible, his faithful ministers, his sacred ordinances, his precious promises. He holds intercourse with our spirits, admits us to communion with himself, allows us to tell him all our fears and all our desires, and assures us that he will withhold from us no good thing. He bids us dismiss all anxious concern, for he himself "careth for us;" he will be our guide; he will be our shield; he will make all things work together for our good, and will never, never leave us nor forsake us! O what manner of love is this!

And "if he doth so much for us in the prison, what will he do for us in the palace!" We are yet minors. But "if children, then heirs,—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Even now, believers are immensely rich. Read the unparalleled inventory of their wealth (1 Cor. iii. 21): "*All things are yours*"—*the world* is the first article—as much of the world as their Father sees good to bestow, and, indeed, *all the world* in a sense, for all things lead their minds to God; "they are steps by which they ascend to their Creator, for in them all they view, as in a bright

mirror, his adorable perfections, and in that meditation exult.—Above all, they perceive in them the love of God towards them. When they view the sun, moon, and stars, they rejoice that their heavenly Father has lighted up so many tapers for them, at which they may work what becomes the sons of God: nor do they less admire these, than if every one of them had his own sun, or his own moon, shining upon him. Indeed, "all things are for the elect's sake"—*life* and *death*; things present and things to come,—all are theirs, for they are Christ's and Christ is God's.

6. *But all this is merely an* EARNEST *of the intended inheritance*;—"the first fruits of the Spirit;" for who can tell what God hath laid up and prepared for them in Heaven? Who can tell what vast powers they may possess; as superior, perhaps, to what they now enjoy, as the talents of angels are now superior to those of men? Who can tell what a glorious habitation they shall occupy?—their "Father's mansions" will be worthy of himself, and Jesus Christ, who is gone to prepare them, will come again and receive his people to himself, that where he is they may be also. Who can tell what pleasant employments shall engage their improved and delighted spirits? Who can tell what blessed and glorious company they shall keep?—saints and angels will certainly be their associates, and "Christ himself shall be with them;" and they shall be "for ever with the Lord!"

Such are some of the *effects* of the love of God to men! But who can possibly describe it aright A consideration, however, of some of its *properties* may a little assist our conceptions.

1. *It is everlasting*—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Jer. xxxi. 3. From before the foundation of the world, God foresaw the apostacy and misery of man, and determined to shew his love to the human race. The effects of this love

were determined upon, and the peculiar objects of it were selected. They were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," that "they should be holy, and without blame, before him in love;"—"they were predestinated to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace," so St. Paul expresses it, in Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. How greatly does this enhance the value of the love of God, and fill with sacred admiration and astonishment the hearts of those in whom this love is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost: they are amazed to think that the great and glorious God should vouchsafe to think of *them;* of them, insignificant and rebellious creatures, and inscribe *their* unworthy names in the book of life!!!

2. *It is free and sovereign.* It is not fixed on particular persons on account of any foreseen excellency and superiority. Whatever be excellent in any person, is the *effect* of this love, and not its *cause.* All men are depraved, polluted, and undone. God was not bound to shew kindness to any one of Adam's fallen race; but, saith he (Rom. ix. 15), "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" and in another place he saith, "I will love them freely." Hos. xiv. 4. If one man differ from another, it is grace that caused him to differ; and, therefore, to free grace is all the glory to be ascribed, as our Lord doth: (Luke x. 21), "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

3. *The love of God is unchangeable.* The love of mortals is liable to much variation; not so the love of God; "he rests in his love;"—"having loved his own he loves them to the end." Their sense of it may vary, and God may hide his face;

and he will do so, "if his children forsake his ways and decline from his commandments;" in love to their souls "he will visit their transgressions with the rod," to bring them back again; "but his loving-kindness he will not take away, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." Ps. lxxxix. 30. No,—"the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord of hosts, that hath mercy on thee." Isa. liv. 10.

## IMPROVEMENT.

For the practical improvement of this subject, we propose the following four directions:—

1. *Believe the love of God*, according to what St. John saith (1 John iv. 16), "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love." To know and to believe this, is to know and believe the whole gospel; for this is indeed the substance of it. The love of God is so exceedingly great, that it is said to "surpass knowledge;" but it does not surpass belief. We cannot fully *comprehend it*, for it is infinite; but we may *believe it* on the testimony of God himself; without which, such is its astonishing greatness, that it might have seemed incredible; but resting on the divine testimony concerning it, we may survey it with delight and pleasure; "its breadth, and length, and depth, and height," that "we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

2. *Receive the love of God.* It is proposed to us in the gospel as the grand attractive—that which is calculated to draw us away from sin and folly, and to raise our affections towards superior objects.—"God *commendeth* his love towards us"—he sets it before us, and recommends it to our notice, to raise our faith, our hope, our admiration, our love, and our joy, by this peculiar excellency

of it—that "while we were yet *sinners*, he sent his dear Son into the world; who "gave himself a ransom" for our souls. Surely, this should draw our souls to God, and cause us instantly, and most thankfully, to receive the gifts of his love. Let us be encouraged to come to God, for God is love.

3. *Return the love of God*—make a suitable return for love so vast and so free. This was the first and great command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" and what can be so powerful an inducement to this as the astonishing love of God to us? Let us say with St. John, "We love him, because he first loved us"—that is, *in consequence* of his having first loved us, without which we never should have loved him; and also from a *view* and *sense* of his having first loved us. He is altogether lovely in himself, and we are under inexpressible obligations to his love; let us love him, therefore, supremely, and prove our love to him by keeping his commandments. "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments." We cannot love him as we ought, nor as he deserves to be loved; but let us love him as we can, and daily lament that we love him no better. Let us prefer his glory above all that is dear to us, and be ready to part with all things for his sake. Thrice did our Lord propose the question to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" And thrice did the zealous apostle declare his attachment. Our Saviour then directed him how to demonstrate his affection—"Feed my sheep." In like manner, let us evince the sincerity of our regard to God, by a ready compliance with his whole will.

4. *Imitate the love of God.* Nothing can render man so truly amiable, as to resemble, in his humble measure, the God of love; and nothing can afford a brighter evidence of our being the objects

of *his* love; for, by this, said Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples—if ye have love one to another." This is Christ's *own* commandment,—his *new* commandment; old indeed in substance, but new in form, and enforced by a new obligation. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another. As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John xiii. 14. He has left among us suitable objects of Christian love—all his members, and especially those who need our care. "The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always; and whensoever ye will ye may do them good." "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." 1 John iv. 7, 8. O let the love of God constrain us to cultivate every amiable temper, and to be forward in every act of kindness to the bodies and souls of men, and especially to all the sons and daughters of affliction; for thus shall we resemble our heavenly Father, and our adorable Saviour, who, when he shall appear in his glory at his second advent, will graciously accept and reward every "labour of love," saying, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

# SERMON LXXVII.

1 CORINTHIANS I. 9.

*God is faithful.*

EACH of the divine perfections is necessary to the complete happiness of a Christian; not one of them can be dispensed with. That God is *almighty*, and *wise*, and *holy*, and *just*, and *good*, is the joy of every believer's heart; but there is another perfection in which the Christian seems to be (if possible) still more interested—that is, his TRUTH or FAITHFULNESS: for the life of every real Christian, while in this world, is a life of faith; and as faith hath respect to the word of God, his faithfulness to that word must be the principal ground of his faith and hope, and consequently of his joy, for his joy and peace are "in believing." There is nothing, therefore, which respects the divine character, that is more immediately connected with our Christian walk, than the *veracity* or *faithfulness of God.* The assertion of St. Paul, in the text, furnishes us with a short, clear, and full proposition, which it shall be our present business scripturally to illustrate, and practically to improve.

## GOD IS FAITHFUL.

Truth is essential to the very existence of God.—It is as impossible to conceive of a God without truth, as of a God without power. Truth is there-

fore inseparable from his nature. The true God is Truth itself. He is the first, chief, and greatest truth, and the source of all truth: so that all things are true or false, as they agree or disagree with their original patterns in the mind of God.

The value of truth is acknowledged by mankind in general. Fallen and corrupt as men are, they have not altogether lost sight of the value of truth: if destitute of it themselves, still they prize it in others. If they do not possess it, they wish to be thought to possess it. Hence, no affront is reckoned so great as being called a liar; it is deemed disgraceful, and so it ought to be deemed, for this is the character of the Devil himself: "He is a liar, and the Father of it." Most awfully do they resemble him who speaks lies; they "are of their father the Devil, and the works of their father they will do." But, the blessed God is infinitely true, and it is absolutely impossible for him to lie. The heathens themselves (in civilized countries) were sensible of the value of truth. One of their wise men said, that "If God should render himself visible to men, he would choose light for his body, and truth for his soul." The Romans built a temple, which they dedicated to Truth, whom they called the sister of Justice; and the most solemn oaths were taken in her name. Indeed, an oath is a kind of sacrifice offered to Truth.

What Reason thus approves, Revelation abundantly confirms, and ascribes Truth to God as an essential perfection of his nature. Even Balaam, that wicked prophet, was constrained to say, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent" (or change his mind): "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numb. xxii. 19. He is called in Scripture "the God of Truth"—"The Lord God, abundant in Truth." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is also called, "He that is true"—"faithful and true:" and the Holy

Ghost is called "The Spirit of Truth." The extent and glory of this perfection is expressed in these lofty terms (Ps. xxxvi. 5.), "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds (or skies)."—"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations: I have said "Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens." "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee!" Ps. lxxxix. 1, 2, 8. The heavens and the heavenly bodies excite our admiration; we see, but cannot comprehend them; they are above our reach, and too large for our grasp: but they are emblems of the power, the mercy, and the truth of God: we see, we admire, we adore these divine perfections; but finite minds can never comprehend them.

The excellency of the divine faithfulness will more fully appear, when we perceive that it results from, or stands connected with, all his other perfections.

1. *It is connected with his* POWER. Ps. cxlvi. 6, "He who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is therein—*He keepeth truth for ever.*" His almighty power enables him, without the possibility of failure, to accomplish all his promises and threatenings. Honest men, however desirous of keeping their word, may be prevented by the unexpected occurrences of insuperable difficulties; but the designs of the Almighty cannot be frustrated. "With God all things are possible." "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" said the reproving angel to the wife of Abraham, when her faith once staggered at the promise. Abraham himself was "strong in faith, giving *glory* to God"—the glory of his power and his fidelity combined; for "he was fully persuaded that, what he had promised he was able to perform." Rom. iv. 21. In like manner, the apostle of the

Gentiles feels perfect composure in the prospect of martyrdom, well knowing "whom he had believed;" and being "fully persuaded that he was *able* to keep that which he had committed unto him." If Noah is to be preserved amidst a drowning world, if Israel is to be delivered from the Egyptian yoke, or to be sustained in a barren wilderness, or to subdue the warlike nations of Canaan, no obstacles shall prevent the promised events; infinite power and infinite faithfulness render them perfectly certain; wisdom prescribes the means; omnipotence makes them effectual; and God is faithful.

2. *The faithfulness of God is connected with his holiness;* indeed it is a branch of it,—without which he could not be holy. "There is no unrighteousness in him." "He cannot lie; it is impossible for God to lie." "He is not a man that he should lie." Lies are the wretched fruit of man's apostacy—his loss of the divine image, the corruption of his once holy nature: but God is unalterably holy; therefore it is said (Ps. lxxxix. 35), "Once have I sworn by my holiness (and I will not lie unto David), his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." Well, therefore, might the Psalmist say, "God hath spoken in his holiness: I will rejoice;" for thus the holiness of God is a pledge of his faithfulness.

3. *The faithfulness of God is necessary from his unchangeableness.* He is the only being absolutely and necessarily unchangeable. Angels have changed, and become devils; Man is changed, and become a rebel; but "I am the Lord," saith he, "I change not;" and it follows, as the blessed effect of his unchangeableness—"therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Mal. iii. 6. Men frequently change their minds, sometimes from good to evil, at other times from evil to good; their second thoughts are best; but God's thoughts can neither be improved nor depraved; they are originally,

perfectly, unalterably good. It was the pride of the Medes and Persians that they would not alter their laws; it was upon the proud presumption that they were so wisely framed as to admit of no improvement; but such indeed are the laws and the promises of God: "with him is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." The promises and vows of men (like Jeptha's and Herod's) are sometimes unlawful in themselves, or incautiously made, so that "there may be more honour in the breach, than in the observance of them." Not so the engagements of Heaven; they are all the product of that holy and wise mind which cannot err, and need not change. "He is of one mind, and what his soul desireth, that he doeth; he performeth the thing that is appointed for me." Job xxiii. 13, 14.

4. *The faithfulness of God is the result of his wisdom.* Among men, the non-performance of promises is frequently occasioned by circumstances which human prudence could not foresee, nor provide against; and therefore good men should not make promises hastily, and never without (at least a *mental*) reference to St. James's caution,—"Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." But no provisoes are necessary when God makes a promise; he has a perfect foreknowledge of every future event, however distant; he knows the end from the beginning, and perceives the connexion of all things, though apparently trifling and casual, all which, instead of defeating his purpose, shall conspire to accomplish it. No difficulties, no disappointments can occur to him; his instruments are always at hand, and willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or ignorantly, they shall all subserve his holy designs. This affords no small encouragement to a reliance on his faithfulness.

5. The faithfulness of God may be contemplated, as connected with his mercy, his love, and his

goodness. The royal Psalmist puts them together (Ps. cxxxviii. 2), "I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth, for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." His love inclines him to make the promise, and his veracity induces him to fulfil it: and it would be dishonourable to God to admit, for a moment, the unjust supposition that he would disappoint the hope which his promise had excited: hence it is pleaded (Ps. cxix. 49), "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." The word of promise is the ground of hope; and it is by the grace of God a believer is enabled to make it such, to depend upon it, and expect its fulfilment; and will He who kindled the holy desire, and filled the soul with hope of the promised blessing, disappoint that hope? It is impossible. The Christian may humbly, yet boldly, say with David, when he pleaded a divine promise (1 Chron. xvii. 23), "Therefore now, Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant be established for ever, and *do as thou hast said.*" Mercy and Truth have met together, and they shall never part. Mercy invites and Truth receives the sinner. Mercy makes the promise, and Truth stands ready to fulfil it; and the union of both shall call forth the Psalmist's song—"I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing praises unto thee among the nations: for thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds." Ps. cviii. 3, 4.

5. Another consideration may confirm our confidence in the faithfulness of God.—The promises are made *in* and *to Christ*, as the head of his church: and faithfulness to him, as well as to us, insures their fulfilment. St. Paul declares, in 2 Cor. i. 20, "All the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God, by us." Jesus Christ is the Surety of the new covenant, and he is deeply concerned in the

fulfilment of the promises, for they are made to him, and to his people in and through him. The persons who shall finally be saved are those of whom he says to the Father, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" and again, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." He also says, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37. We also read of "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." Titus i. 2. Was not this promise made to the eternal Son of God, and to and for believers in him, their covenant head, before the earliest date of time, and of which he gave a specimen in the first promise, immediately after the fall of man? All the promises then, being made to Christ, the Mediator, respecting both himself and his people, shall be punctually fulfilled, "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

7. If any farther consideration be needful to establish our faith in the faithfulness of God, let it be that wonderful condescension of his grace, whereby he is pleased to confirm his promise by an OATH. In this manner he was pleased to stoop to confirm the faith of Abraham, when the promise of a numerous posterity, so contrary to human appearances, was made to him. So St. Paul relates the matter (Heb. vi. 13), "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely, blessing I will bless thee;" in the book of Genesis it is, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord" (Gen. xxii. 16): and in like manner he is pleased to deal with Christian believers (Heb. vi. 17), "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel confirmed it by an oath; that by *two* immutable things (in which it was impossible for God to lie) *we* might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay

hold upon the hope set before us"—that is, upon Christ. In this most marvellous manner does the God of Truth vouchsafe to antidote our fears, and put our unbelief to shame; by this double security does he encourage our hope, and constrain us to say, as in our text, "God is faithful."

8. In the last place, and, if possible, still farther to satisfy the most incredulous mind, let us call in to our aid *the experience of the people of God in all ages.* And here, what a cloud of witnesses might we summon to give their evidence in support of what ought never to have been questioned,—the faithfulness of Jehovah!

The first promise that God was pleased to make to his apostate creature related to the Saviour, who, under the title of "the seed of the woman," was to "bruise the serpent's head," or, in other words, to "destroy the works of the Devil." The fulfilment of this promise was deferred (we must not say delayed) for the long space of four thousand years: and then, "when the fulness of the time was come,"—the proper, the appointed time, neither sooner nor later—"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," to be a Redeemer. With eager longings of holy desire, many successive generations looked forward to this grand event; and when the moment arrived, fixed in the divine decree, the Saviour appeared. Let us remember that there is nothing like distance of time in the mind of God, between the promise and the fulfilment; "a thousand years with him are as one day, and a single day is as a thousand years;" and hence some events are spoken of in the prophets as present, or even as past, which are yet to come; for God knows nothing of past or future, all is one eternal *now;* and if he speak, it is done.

Was the universal flood threatened, and was Noah with his family to be secured? The event corresponded with the threatening, though one hundred and twenty years intervened; and when that period

of reprieve expired, "in the self-same day entered Noah into the ark." The world perished; Noah was preserved; and the word of the Lord, which cannot fail, was accomplished.

Was Abraham, when a hundred years of age, and childless, perhaps for fifty years after his marriage, to have one son, and descending from him a vast posterity, like the stars of heaven for multitude? Every thing like probability was against such an event; but Abraham had the fullest confidence in the power and faithfulness of Jehovah, and the promise was fulfilled; and every Jew we see is a witness of it.

Was Israel, long enslaved and depressed, to be freed from the Egyptian yoke? What, though Pharaoh was proud and obstinate,—what though, after a reluctant consent, he pursued the fugitives with a mighty army,—what though rocks and mountains were on either hand, and the raging sea before them,—the promise could not fail!—the sea retires at God's command; it forms a wall on each side of them, and they pass through its dry channel in perfect safety; immediately after which, the waves, obedient to their Maker, resume their place, and overwhelm, with tremendous destruction, the affrighted host of Egypt. Thus Israel was taught that "God is faithful."

Pass on with these distinguished people into the deserts of Arabia, and rather than the promise of God shall fail, behold them sustained for the greater part of forty years, with food daily rained down from Heaven, and their thirst assuaged with water flowing from the flinty rock! But how are they to dispossess seven mighty and warlike nations, whose fortified cities were "walled up to heaven," and in whose eyes they thought "themselves like grasshoppers?" The terror of God fell upon these bold warriors; the walls of Jericho fell flat before the Israelites; and the land of milk and honey became an easy conquest. The overflowing

Jordan recedes, and opens a ready passage into the heart of the country, and then the faithfulness of God is thus proclaimed by his honoured servant Joshua, "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Josh. xxiii. 14. Surely all the people would say, "God is faithful."

It would be easy to follow the Scripture history, and adduce a multitude of instances to the same effect, but our limits forbid, and these may serve as a sufficient specimen. We proceed to a practical

## IMPROVEMENT.

1. From hence we may learn *the unreasonableness and sinfulness of unbelief.* Is the blessed God uniformly faithful to his word, whether of promise or threatening? What then is the crime of unbelief but the denial of this—the denial of his truth and veracity—the charging him with falsehood? The apostle John, therefore, expressly says (1 John v. 10), "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar;" he who rejects the testimony of God in the gospel, who denies that "God hath given to us (believers) eternal life, and that this life is in his Son," (verse 11), charges the truth of God with a falsehood; and can any blasphemy be more criminal? Let the example of the ancient Israelites be a warning to the world; for "unto them was the gospel (the good news) proclaimed"—the promise of the earthly Canaan; but not giving credit to the promise, God was offended, and "sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest;" "so then we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Our wisdom, therefore, is to profit by their punishment, and to hear with faith the voice of God in his gospel, "while it is

called to-day; for this is the solemn declaration of the God of truth, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36.

2. *Let God be honoured in his faithfulness, by a suitable confidence* in it. The life of a Christian is a life of faith. God's faithfulness and our faith are relative terms. His promises are the ground of our faith. Faith has a constant regard to them; and our expectation of their fulfilment rests upon the faithfulness of God in performing them, and will generally be proportioned to our belief of that faithfulness. It is said of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, in reference to the long-promised heir, that "she judged him faithful who had promised;" that is, she did so *habitually*, though her faith, like that of most believers, sometimes fluctuated. "She judged him to be faithful," and therefore expected the promised blessing. This, then, is the point, Do we, or do we not, judge a promising God to be a faithful God? If we do, we shall experience some degree of "joy and peace in believing:" if we do not, doubts and fears will burden our minds, and cloud our prospects. By believing that God is faithful, we shall obtain peace, and in no other way. "Said I not unto thee" (that is, to Martha, at the grave of her brother Lazarus) "said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" And so the Lord speaks to us—If thou canst credit my testimony, rely on my promises, and trust my faithfulness to make them good to thee, thou shalt see my glory; thou shalt have my peace which passeth understanding, to keep thy heart and mind, while in this vale of tears: and thou shalt hereafter be with me where I am, behold my glory, and share in it for ever. Hath not each of us reason to say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!"

Finally, Let us, in our humble measure, try to imitate the blessed God in this his glorious attribute; let us be "followers (imitators) of God as dear children;" let us imitate him in faithfulness. Even a heathen philosopher (Pythagoras) when asked, "What makes men like God?" answered, "Their speaking the truth." Let not Christians be worse than heathens. Many, alas! called Christians, are so. The wicked are in the constant habit of lying; "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Ps. lviii. 3); and in this practice they resemble him who is the "father of lies;" and without repentance and pardon, all "liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8. But from this vain and wicked conversation every true believer is redeemed. God's children are described (Isa. lxiii. 8) as lovers of truth:—"Surely they are my people, children that will not lie." Let this be our character. Let us, as directed by the apostle, "speak every man truth with his neighbour." Above all, let the faithfulness of God to us constrain us to be faithful to him. We are engaged by baptism, profession, and self-dedication, to be the Lord's; let us then hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful who hath promised."

*God, with all his Perfections, the Christian's God.*

# SERMON LXXVIII.

PSALM XLVIII. 14.

*For this God is our God, for ever and ever.*

THE glorious perfections of Deity form the subject of this volume; in which, after an introductory discourse on the importance of the knowledge of God, we have made a feeble attempt to display the *power*, the *wisdom*, the *holiness*, the *justice*, the *omnipresence*, the *patience*, the *sovereignty*, the *goodness*, the *mercy*, the *love*, and the *faithfulness* of God; and now, what remains but to exult in this glorious Being, and to say, in the triumphant language of the Psalmist, "This God is *our* God for ever and ever!"

These words conclude a hymn of praise, composed, probably, on occasion of some eminent victory; but, undoubtedly, applicable to the glories of the gospel church. The psalm begins with a declaration of the greatness of God, as he manifested himself in Sion. The situation of the temple, which was remarkably beautiful, afforded a suitable emblem of the Christian church, in which true happiness may certainly be found; there, the love of God in Christ is manifested and enjoyed, and there he presides for its infallible protection; and the Psalmist concludes with the words of our text, exulting in such a God, and in his interest in him, with the security it affords through life,

to its termination. These words furnish us with a good conclusion to these discourses on the Divine Perfections, and it shall be our present business to prove that—

It is the unspeakable privilege of believers, that God, in Christ, is their own God, and will be so for ever.

A pious Jew, in ancient times, looking on all the nations around him, and beholding the heathen bowing to their pretended gods of wood and stone, would pity their stupidity; but contemplating the God that made the heavens, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, glorious in holiness, venerable in praises, and doing wonders, would, with sacred joy exclaim, "THIS GOD is our God!"—"great is OUR GOD above all other gods."

The believer in Christ enjoys this privilege also; for it is the grand blessing of the covenant of grace, as mentioned by St. Paul, in the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, (ver. 10.) "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel" (that is, with the church of Christ) "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and *I will be to them a God*, and they shall be to me a people."

A covenant is either an *agreement* or an *appointment*. Covenant, in this place, signifies *an appointment*— a gracious appointment made by God himself, in behalf of all real Christians;—the *New* covenant, in distinction from the *Old* covenant, made with the nation of Israel at Sinai, which consisted chiefly in precepts, prohibitions, and emblems of future blessings to be revealed, in the gospel. That covenant was given by Moses, "but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In the new covenant, or appointment, we have chiefly PROMISES—promises of all spiritual blessings, in and through Christ Jesus. One of these pro-

mises is, "They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest," ver. 11. The importance of this blessing was shewn in the Introductory Sermon; and the design of all the following discourses is to promote the knowledge of God, in all his glorious perfections; but the chief blessing of all is —"I will be *their God.*" This comprehends all good things; it includes all that can be needed or desired; yea, infinitely more than "we can ask or think." We justly admire the perfections of God—what he is *in himself;* but how much more admirable is it, to have a personal interest in him, —to know that he is all this to and for his people; so that we may boldly say, "This God is *our* God!"

But let it be observed, that it is only *in* and *through Jesus Christ* that he becomes *our God.* He does not transact with man *immediately,* but through a Mediator:—"No man cometh to the Father but by him;" and, through him, God the Father cometh to men. "God was *in Christ,* reconciling the world unto himself." Hence the name of the Saviour is "IMMANUEL"—that is, "God with us." As Immanuel, he is God in our nature; God engaged on our behalf and manifested for our salvation. Through faith in his blood, the sinner comes to God, and obtains the pardon of all his sins, which is another blessing of the covenant, mentioned in ver. 12, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And by the influence of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in every believer, a separation from the world is effected, and a life of communion with God commenced, which shall never end; according to the promise recorded in 2 Cor. vi. 16, &c. "God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and

touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Truly happy, then, are all believers in Christ; having come to God through faith in him, they are divinely authorised to adopt the words of the text, "This God is our God!"

In ancient times, long before the brighter discoveries of the gospel were afforded, we find some eminent believers distinguished as having a special interest in God. Jehovah, who, by his sovereign grace, called Abraham from among the idolaters of Chaldea, was pleased to style himself "the God of Abraham." By this name he made himself known to Moses at the burning bush, when he was about to deliver the posterity of Abraham from their bondage in Egypt. He called himself also, at the same time, "The God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. iii. 6.); and thus he encouraged the children of Israel to expect that the promises made to their fathers should certainly be accomplished.—In like manner, New Testament believers are more clearly taught to expect a future and eternal inheritance in Heaven: "wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called *their God*, for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16.): as if it had been said, God would be ashamed to be called *their God*, if nothing more than the good things of this life were given them; especially as it is the lot of far the greater part of them to be poor and afflicted in the present world; but having "prepared for them a city," a glorious habitation, even "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" he is not ashamed,—he thinks it no dishonour to be, and to be called *their God* and Father. "This," saith he, as if exulting in the relation, "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." Exod. iii. 15. God's relation to his people is what *he* will ever

remember, let us then never forget it;—never neglect to take the comfort, nor to give him the glory of it—It is God's memorial; let it be ours.

We find Moses, the faithful servant of the Lord, glorying in his relation to God (Exod. xv. 2.) "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation; he is *my* God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my *father's* God, and I will exalt him." As this was part of the song composed on occasion of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea, Moses may perhaps allude to the name of God, as "the God of Abraham;" such indeed he proved himself to be, to his posterity. Thrice happy is he who, celebrating a still greater salvation than that of Israel, can sing, —"He is *my* God, and my *father's* God; I will exalt him!"

In the book of Psalms, we frequently meet with this sweet appropriation of the name of God. The Psalmist speaks thus—"Thou art my God, from my mother's womb:"—"I trusted in thee, I said, Thou art my God;"—"I will sing praise unto thee;"—"I will extol thee, my God, O King, and bless thy name for ever!"

Daniel also, had good reason to own his relation to God, when the King who had caused him to be thrown into the den of lions, asked, with a lamentable voice, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions!" The praying man of God replied, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouth." Such was the impression produced by this exertion of divine power in behalf of the prophet, that Darius required that all his subjects "should tremble and fear before *the God of Daniel.*"

We might multiply instances of this kind; but let us rather pass on, and shew, more particularly, that the several attributes of the blessed God which have been surveyed in the preceding ser-

mons, afford abundant occasion to the believer, to rejoice in his relation to Jehovah, and triumphantly to say, "This is my God!"

Our God is *Almighty*. Is any thing, then, too hard for him? Whatever he hath promised he is able to perform; and he hath performed such wonders in the fulfilment of his promises to his ancient people the Jews, and to all his believing people ever since, that unbelief may blush to suspect he will ever fail to accomplish with his hand what he hath spoken with his mouth. Remember his mighty works in the creation of the world; in the preservation and government of the world: and in his marvellous interpositions in behalf of his people: the waters shall not drown, the sun shall not set, the fire shall not burn, lions shall not devour, when he forbids: and if he give the word of command, bread shall descend from Heaven, water shall flow from the rock, devouring birds shall feed the prophet, five loaves shall satisfy five thousand people, and the dead shall come forth from their graves. What cannot he do for his friends? and should they not say, This God is our God; and if God be for us, who can be against us?

Our God is WISE—he is Wisdom. What a privilege then is it to be under his direction! and this *is* the privilege of his people, as it follows immediately after the words of our text—"He will be our Guide even unto death;" he will direct our steps through this mazy wilderness; nor forsake us when we die; but conduct us safely through Jordan to the possession of the promised rest. Well may we "cast our cares upon him," if we believe that "he careth for us."

"Since all the downward tracts of time,
God's watchful eye surveys,
O who so wise to choose our lot,
And regulate our ways?"

Our God is HOLY; unlike the pretended deities of the heathen, who were abominably impure, the patrons and patterns of infamous vices; so that we may say with exultation, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, *glorious in holiness?*" It is the joy of a believer's heart that God is holy. A wicked man, wishing to indulge his sins, might wish that God were like himself, and would wink at his impurity; but a Christian rejoices in the holiness of God; it keeps him low in his own eyes; it makes him hunger and thirst after righteousness; and encourages the hope tha this holy God will, by all his ordinances, and all his dispensations, make him "a partaker of his holiness."

Our God is JUST. Shall he not then always do right? It is the glory of the gospel, and that which renders it peculiarly satisfactory to the mind, that therein God has manifested his justice no less than his mercy—"he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." The Christian, then, has nothing to dread, but every thing to hope, from this attribute. He who said to Abraham, on leaving his native land, "I am thy shield," said also, "I am thy exceeding great reward." Nothing can possibly be lost by adherence to Christ and his cause; God is not unrighteous, so that he should forget the work of faith, and the labour of love; he that soweth to the Spirit shall reap of the Spirit; and God, the righteous Judge, will, at the great day, bestow the crown of righteousness on every one who was faithful unto death. How joyfully shall every conqueror, on receiving that crown, exult, This righteous God is my God!

Our God is OMNIPRESENT. Pleasing reflection to the Christian! Wherever he is, God is there,—in the closet, in the church, in the world; at home, abroad; by sea or land; amongst friends or foes, Christians or Infidels; in prosperity, or in adversity, God is there. The salutary thought bridles

the unruly tongue restrains the rovings of the eye, repels the intruding thoughts of sin, and quenches the fiery darts of temptation. It stills the rising murmur of impatience, corrects the mistakes of unbelief, and enables the soul to endure, "as seeing him who is invisible."

Our God is PATIENT. It is well for the world, it is well for *us*, that he is so. It was justly remarked, by an old divine, that if the most tender-hearted man in the world were to sit down on the throne of God, for a single hour, and behold, as God continually does, the provoking abominations committed by men during that hour, he would undoubtedly, in the next, set the world on fire and destroy it. "But he is God, and not man, therefore we are not consumed." Let us not abuse this amiable perfection by continuing in sin, but rejoice that this patient God is our God, and learn from him to be patient too.

Our God is SOVEREIGN; he doeth as he pleaseth, among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Let us glorify him as such; even when we cannot account for his sovereign proceedings. Thus did the apostle Paul, when he had contemplated the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, with their future restoration—"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" And how much reason has every believer to admire the divine sovereignty, for to this he ascribes his personal salvation. "By the grace of God I am what I am." He alone "made me to differ from the most abandoned wretch on earth. O to grace how great a debtor am I! "Bless thou the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!"

Our God is GOOD, and doeth good. Well may man say so; man, so highly favoured in his structure, in the powers of his mind, in his superiority

over the creatures, in his immortality, and above all, in his redemption by the Son of God. God is indeed, in a vast variety of respects, "good to all;" "his tender mercies are over all his works," and "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." O that men, O that *all* men would praise the Lord for his goodness; but let them especially do so, who have a special interest in his favour; let them shout for joy, and say, This *good* God is *our* God, for ever and ever!

Our God is MERCIFUL.—"Mercy *belongeth* to him," it is his progressive, his peculiar excellency, one of the brightest jewels of his crown; it is his delight, it is his glory. Now, every believer, like converted Saul of Tarsus, hath "obtained mercy;" and who can sufficiently prize it?—it is great mercy, rich mercy, free mercy, manifold mercy, matchless mercy, infinite mercy, yea, eternal mercy! O praise the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever! Well may the pardoned sinner cry, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Micah vii. 18.

Our God is LOVE. This is the most amazing perfection of all; the love of such a glorious and holy Being, to creatures so degraded and defiled by sin! Surveying this, we are astonished; and try, but in vain, to measure its vast dimensions—its breadth, its length, its depth, and its height; it surpasses, by infinite degrees, the most advanced knowledge of saints and angels; yet, in a sense, it is apprehended, it is enjoyed, it is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit; and then indeed the Christian may triumphantly cry, This God is my God, for ever and ever!

Our God is FAITHFUL. This crowns the whole. He is faithful to his promises; and his promises ensure the final salvation of every believing soul.

He has engaged never to "forsake the work of his own hands;" and, by putting "his fear in the hearts of his people," he has engaged that "they shall not forsake him." Hence our text celebrates the permanence of the privilege enjoyed—"this God is our God—FOR EVER *and* EVER"—terms which in Scripture always signify that which is positively eternal. What a portion then is that of the believer! The landlord cannot say of his fields, these are mine for ever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, this is mine for ever and ever. These possessions shall soon change masters; these possessors shall soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they shall occupy, may not long be theirs; but it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to say, or to have a right to say, "This glorious God, with all his divine perfections, is my God, for ever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from his love."

## IMPROVEMENT.

It may be truly said of the wicked—They have no God. They may have wealth, and wit, and friends, but they are without God in the world; they are therefore miserably poor, and in the way to be miserable for ever. At present you may contrive to fill up your fleeting moments with the business and pleasures of a transitory world; banishing God, so far as you are able, from your thoughts. Thus you may *live;* but how will you *die?* for die you must, and may die soon: and remember, that after death comes the judgment. At the dread tribunal of God, what are you to expect? From which of his divine perfections can you hope to gain advantage? Perhaps you will say, From his mercy. But know this, that it is not at the bar of judgment that mercy is to be dispensed. *This* is the world, this is the *time*, for mercy; and if not sought, through Jesus Christ, it will be refused when sought hereafter. O seek it now! Delay is

dangerous;—it may be fatal. You have not a moment to lose. Lament your neglect of God hitherto, and cry with all your might, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" for how tremendous would be your state, if you should see all the people of God around the throne, shouting, "This God is our God, for ever and ever," while you, justly banished to an awful distance, and doomed to eternal darkness, must be constrained to say, Alas! Alas! this God is *not* my God, nor will be mine for ever and ever. May divine grace prevent so horrid a condition!

And now, methinks, every serious person present will be putting this question to his own conscience, Is this blessed privilege mine? May I say, This God is my God?

I answer, Do you consider this as the most desirable of all good things? Do you prefer it—infinitely prefer it? Compared with this, do wealth and pleasure, friends and relations, the whole world, appear a trifle? Can you adopt the words of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside (or in comparison of) thee?" If you see the value of having God as yours, this will be your deliberate language.

Wishing that God may be yours, do you come to him, in the only way that you can come, through faith in Jesus Christ? And thus coming, can you, and do you, renounce the idol of self-righteousness, accounting all things but loss that you may be accepted in Christ? Do you *yield* yourself to him—gladly forsaking your vain companions, and sinful pleasures, and willing to part with the world for his sake?—for you cannot have *two* gods; you cannot serve God and Mammon. Do you give up soul, body, and spirit to him, as your reasonable service; determined, by divine grace, to serve him faithfully, and follow him fully, all

your days? to *obey* him as your God? to *submit* to him as your God? to *love* him, and to *glorify* him, as your God?— If so, you may be permitted to say, and you will say it most humbly and thankfully, "This God is my God." Happy the man that is in such a state, happy is he who hath the Lord for his God, whose hope the Lord is! Happy Christian! thou art indeed "rich and increased in goods, and standest in need of nothing" more to make thee happy. Divine *Power* protects thee, *Wisdom* guides thee, *Holiness* sanctifies thee, *Justice* secures thee, *Omnipresence* surrounds thee, *Patience* will not be provoked at thee, *Sovereignty* hath chosen thee, *Goodness* enricheth thee, *Mercy* forgives thee, *Love* delights in thee, and *Faithfulness* will conduct thee safely to Heaven, and place the crown of glory on thine head. Then, amidst ten thousand saints and angels, thou shalt exult in the matchless privilege, and say, "This God is my God, and he will never cease to be mine! This God is my God, for ever, and ever, and ever!" Amen and Amen.

END OF VOL. VI.

J. Westley and Co. 27, Ivy Lane.

# VILLAGE SERMONS;

OR, SHORT AND PLAIN

## DISCOURSES,

FOR THE USE OF

*FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES.*

BY GEORGE BURDER.

*VOL. VII.*

CONTAINING THIRTEEN SERMONS.

*Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.*
2 Cor. iii. 12.

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# SERMON LXXIX.

JOHN VII. 46.

*Never man spake like this man.*

"THE tongue is a little member, but it boasteth great things;" and, indeed, great things have been effected by it. Orators, generals, advocates, senators, and preachers, have produced wonders by their speeches; but the greatest and best of them all is not to be compared with him of whom the words of our text were, in an ecstacy of admiration, spoken.

The Pharisees and chief priests, who had determined to reject all the evidence that Jesus gave of his divine mission, alarmed at his growing popularity, took measures to apprehend and silence him. Many people, it appears, had already believed on him, and were suitably impressed with the wonders he had wrought, so that they openly said, "When Messias cometh, will he do more miracles that this man hath done?" The rulers therefore determined upon making him their prisoner, sent officers to take him, and were waiting with the expectation of gratifying their malice by seeing him arraigned at their bar. But how were they disappointed, when the officers returned without their expected prisoner! and when asked why they had not brought him, they answered, in the words of the text, *Never man spake like this man!* What could have been more honourable to the character of our Lord than this report? Plutarch mentions it as

a memorable proof of the extraordinary eloquence of Mark Anthony, that, when soldiers were sent to kill him, he pleaded for his life in such affecting language, that he totally disarmed them of their resolution, and melted them into tears: but these officers are vanquished, not by the forcible arguments of a man pleading for his life,—but by hearing one of the ordinary discourses of our Lord, not particularly directed to them, but to the people at large; which is a circumstance much more remarkable. They returned to their employers in amazement; and without attempting an apology for their failure, they broke out into the pathetic language of the text—*Never man spake like this man!*

The observation they made upon our Lord's discourse was certainly just, and imported more than they were aware of, and what we are better able than they were to express. They heard him but once, and that perhaps not for an hour; but how many of his discourses, committed to writing by men inspired of God, and handed down to us, have we read and heard!—and if we heard them with understanding, and mixed them with faith, we have much more reason than they had to say, *Never man spake like this man!*

In order that we may more fully perceive the reason of this, and learn still more highly to prize his heavenly teaching, let us consider and illustrate the following observation:—

Jesus Christ is incomparably the greatest and best Teacher the world ever knew.

It is fit and becoming "that in all things He may have the pre-eminence;" for he is the First and the Last, the Almighty. In every character that he assumes, which, for the sake of our feeble minds, is compared to something human, he discovers infinite superiority, for he is the source of all that is excellent and admirable in the best of those human characters

with which he condescends to be compared; and well may it be allowed that he "spake as never man spake," who himself made man's mouth, endowed him with the admirable faculty of speech, and who furnished the finest orators in the world with all their most brilliant talents.

Is he, for instance, a King?—Yes; he is "the King of kings, and the Lord of lords," and his kingdom ruleth over all; his reign is the most pacific; his subjects are the most happy; his government the most equitable; his influence the most extended; and his kingdom that which shall never have an end.

Is he a Priest?—Yes; but far greater than Aaron. Jesus offered a sacrifice, but it was only once,—it was once for all; a sacrifice that needed no repetition, like that of ordinary priests; but it was at once a propitiation for the sins of the whole world—not for Jews only, but for all of every country and in every age who should believe on him.

Is he a Prophet?—Yes; and such an one as the world never before heard. "God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the (ordinary) prophets;" and among them, we highly venerate the names of Moses, and Abraham, Isaiah, and Elijah, and John. But a greater than any of these is here; and if we regard this holy Prophet aright, we shall have good cause to say, *Never man spake like this man!* And this will plainly appear if you consider three things:—

*The Matter,—the Manner,—and the Effect, of his Instructions.*

Let us first consider the *Matter* of his instructions. What was it that he taught? And here we shall find none of that wretched trifling, which distinguished the scribes, and pharisees, and rabbis, among the Jews; some specimens of which our Lord has given, in order to expose them.—No; our Lord's discourses

were grave, solid, and of eternal moment. For instance,

He truly revealed the divine character.—" He who was from eternity in the bosom of the Father," and had an intimate acquaintance with the whole mind and will of God, " he hath revealed him ; he hath manifested the divine name and nature to the men who were given him out of the world," and qualified them to be the instructors of mankind. Doubtless, there is more of the true knowledge of God displayed in one single discourse of our divine Redeemer, than in all the volumes composed by heathen sages.

Again: He fully explained the will of God, as revealed, long before, in the moral law. In the Ten Commandments we have the will of God in epitome; —we have " the root of the matter ;" but in the discourses of Christ, we have the spiritual meaning and extent of the law;—we have the lofty tree, with all its extended branches. The Jews had the law ; but it was miserably expounded to them by their teachers ; who not only dwelt chiefly on its outward rites and ceremonies, neglecting the weightier matters, but by their wretched traditions set aside the design of it. With what authority did our Lord correct these dangerous mistakes, and point out the true and spiritual meaning of the law, particularly in his Sermon on the Mount!—We find him also insisting upon the spiritual nature of that worship which God requires, and which alone he will accept. He showed that it was not merely worshipping in the holy place at Jerusalem, nor the mere use of divinely appointed means, but that God, who is a spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth ; that the washing of the outside of the cup and the platter was of little moment: he insisted upon the religion of the heart; he showed the necessity of private prayer, of closet-devotion, and of purity of motive in all our religious actions; he

showed that the kingdom of heaven came not with observation and outward show, as the Jews expected, but that it was of an *internal* nature, and consisted in peace, and righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost; he showed men that love is the very essence of true religion,—love to God and love to man: and how admirable were our Lord's precepts with regard to the love of our neighbour! In his parable of the good Samaritan, he shows that we ought even to treat our enemies with kindness, and melt them down by acts of friendship.

But especially did the superiority of our Lord's preaching appear in the display he made of the divine mercy, of the love of God to sinful men, in the gift of his only begotten Son, who came into our world to die for them! With what heart-cheering words did he open his commission at Nazareth, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." The prophets usually came to men with heavy tidings, called *The burden of the Lord,* denouncing curses upon the disobedient; but our blessed Saviour opened his mouth with blessings upon the poor, the meek, the mourners, the pure in heart, and even on those who were persecuted for righteousness' sake—characters far from being generally deemed happy; and how divinely sweet and consolatory were the gracious sayings that dropped from his lips! such as "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost;"—"The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;"—"Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;"

—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Again, Jesus unveiled the invisible and eternal world. Hitherto, little had been disclosed. The patriarchs, indeed, sought a better country than Canaan,—a heavenly country; yet they were not favoured with such a discovery of its excellencies and glories as was made by the mouth of Jesus, who came down from Heaven on purpose to direct men thither. By him the immortality of the soul was fully and plainly asserted. "Fear not them," said he, "who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." He plainly taught the nature of the future world, and the existence of the soul in a separate state from the body, as when he said to the penitent thief on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He taught the final separation of those characters who are united in the visible church,—the wheat and the tares,—the good and bad fishes,—the wise and the foolish virgins; a separation of whom shall be made in the great day: but,

II. The superiority of our Lord's instruction appears in the *manner*, as well as in the matter, of it.

He taught more *clearly* than any one who had gone before him. The Gospel-truths which were revealed in the Old Testament, were described as "shadows of good things to come," but the body is Christ. The writings of the prophets are frequently obscure, for they themselves were imperfectly acquainted with the import of their own prophecies; but our Lord's teaching was like a morning without clouds, like the rising of the sun, with healing in his wings. The light of the Gospel broke through the obscurity of the Law. How sweetly familiar

were the instructions of our Lord in parables! In the manner of fables he conveyed the great truths of religion;—a pleasing mode of instruction, well adapted to both classes of his hearers; for the teachable easily perceived the drift of his discourses; or, if they knew it not, they humbly asked to be informed; while those proud opposers, who only sought to cavil, found enough to become stumbling-blocks to their own ruin. You remember our Lord's Parable of the Sower, to show the different effects of the preached word; and his setting a little child in the midst of his disciples to teach them humility,

Our Lord's teaching was also distinguished by the *mild* and affectionate manner of it. Indeed, he courts the attention of his disciples upon this ground: "Learn of me," says he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart;"—no forbidding, no philosophic or priestly haughtiness; but waiting to be gracious, and willing to diffuse knowledge; he was indulgent in all his behaviour, even to his dull disciples, and gentle to his bitterest enemies. Paul speaks of "the gentleness of Christ," and "the bowels of Christ." How pathetic were his lamentations over Jerusalem! and how charming his farewell discourse to his disciples!

Again, Our Lord taught the people *faithfully*. He honestly told his disciples what they were to expect, if they became his followers—that they must deny themselves, and take up their cross! that they would not, perhaps, have accommodation equal to the foxes of the wilderness, or the birds of the air; but they must look for divisions and discord, and evil speakings, yea, for death itself. He also plainly forewarned men of their danger; he boldly exposed the ignorance and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; he warned men against them as the blind leaders of the blind, lest both should fall into the ditch.

How *zealous*, also, was our Lord in giving these

instructions! he was like a man in earnest, who felt the importance of what he taught. "The zeal of thine house," says he, "hath eaten me up—hath even consumed me!" insomuch that his own relatives were ready to suspect his sanity, and intimated that he was beside himself.

Observe, also, how *majestically* he spoke. Never man before could speak like him! Even the common people observed that he spoke with authority, and not as the scribes. The dignity of his manner, and the weight of his discourses, constrained his hearers to say, "Never man spake like this man!" —and this will appear still more clearly, when we consider,

III. *The grand effect of his teaching.*

He who spoke on earth in this astonishing manner, was no less a person than he who said at the creation of the world, "Let there be light, and there was light." Powerful was the effect of our Lord's word on things inanimate. When the tempestuous wind fiercely raged, and the waves of the sea threatened instant destruction, it was only for him to say, "Peace, be still," and there was a great calm.

Demons, who at that time obtained permission to possess the bodies of men, and grievously tormented them, were banished with a single word; and the poor demoniacs were found sitting at his feet in their right mind.

And with respect to men,—what power accompanied his words! Did he command the fishermen of Galilee to forsake their nets and their boats, or did he command the wealthy publican to leave the receipt of custom, they instantly comply, forsake all their occupations and possessions, and immediately join his humble train. Did atrocious sinners mingle with the multitude who flocked to hear him preach, one word from our Lord, spoken to their hearts,

changed them in a moment. She who had been an atrocious sinner, a person of notorious character, follows Jesus even into the house of a Pharisee, bedewing his feet with the tears of penitence, and wiping them with the hair of her head. Zaccheus, before an extortioner, hears Jesus invite himself to his house, receives him gladly, and, changed by his grace, immediately becomes another man. Who but Jesus could have dared to say to a weeping penitent, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee?" Can any forgive sins but God only?

And still his word (and the preached Gospel is his word) produces, by the power of the Holy Spirit, similar effects. For what purpose was the Gospel ordained? "To open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and to translate them from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in him." Our Lord declares what should be the grand effect and influence of his Gospel:—"The hour cometh," said he, "and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." And thus it proved to the Ephesians: they were originally "dead in trespasses and sins;" but they were "quickened" by the word of the Lord Jesus. So it was with the Corinthians: they had been wallowing in every sort of vice; but "they were washed, they were justified, they were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;" they became new creatures,—old things passed away,—all became new.

St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians (chapter the 14th, verse the 24th), describes the manner in which this great change was, in the primitive times, frequently effected. Speaking of the religious assemblies of the first Christians, where the word of the Gospel was preached, "There cometh in one," saith he, "that believeth not, or one unlearned,"—

ignorant of Christ and the Gospel,—and "he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth;"—the person described came in, it may be as a spy, or merely to mock at what he might hear; but, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the word touches his heart; he is convinced of his sin and danger; he renounces his former idolatry; becomes a spiritual worshipper of the true God; and is convinced, from what he feels, that the people, whom before he despised, are indeed the people of God, and that his presence is among them.

The power that produces this conviction, and this mental revolution, is and must be divine; and St. Paul ascribes it to the same creative voice, which at the beginning said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Speaking to the same church of the Corinthians (2d epistle, chap. 4, ver. 6), he says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." What a grand idea does this give of the power of divine grace on the souls of men! It is the voice of him that spake the most glorious creatures into being, that speaks to the heart, and bids the light of the Gospel enter. It is Jesus, by whom all things were originally made, and without whom nothing was made, who is the Author of the new creation in the soul of man: and, blessed be God, the same effects are still produced, though rarely so suddenly and so visibly, yet as really and truly, by the ministry of the Gospel of Christ; of which, we trust, there are amongst us more than a few living witnesses.

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To conclude. What has been said may, we trust,

excite our admiration, and constrain us to use the language of the text, *Never man spake like this man!* But this is not enough: let us be anxious to hear him ourselves; each of us, for himself, to receive his word. It will little avail us, to know that nearly 1800 years ago a distinguished person "spake as never man spake," unless we know that we have heard his voice and have believed in his name. For, be it observed, that still Christ speaketh to us, according to Hebrews xii. 25: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh *from heaven:* whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the heavens."

When our Lord made his appearance on earth, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, *hear ye him!*" And again, "This is the Prophet that God promised to raise up, *hear him;* and it shall come to pass, that if any one will not hear that prophet, he shall be cut off from among the people."—Doubtless, Christ still speaks to us by his blessed word; let us then beware of the sin and danger of rejecting him: for, as it is written in the 12th chapter of St. John's Gospel, and the 48th verse, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my word, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

It is, on the other hand, the distinguishing character of all true disciples, that they affectionately and practically attend to the voice of Christ. Our Lord says, in the 10th chapter of St. John's Gospel, verse 27th, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:" and in the 3d and 4th verses of that chapter, speaking of himself as the Shepherd, he says, "The sheep hear his voice: and he goeth before them,

and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice: and a stranger will they not follow;" but they follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. Let us then, my friends, like Mary, whom he so highly commended, take our station at his feet, and thus choose, like her, the good part, which shall not be taken from us. Let us earnestly implore the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may truly understand, believe, and obey, the word of Christ; let it "dwell in us richly;" and if at any time we are tempted to withdraw from him, let us still cleave to him with purpose of heart, and repel every temptation to forsake this divine teacher, saying, with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (if we forsake thee;) "for thou," and only thou, "hast the words of eternal life."

Finally. How glorious will be the voice of Christ at the last day, when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven;" when all mankind shall be roused by his voice—the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God; when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; attend his bar, and receive their doom! Then may it be our happiness to hear, from his own blessed lips, that delightful sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."—Amen.

# SERMON LXXX.

## MATTHEW IX. 12.

*But when he heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

THE Scriptures of truth uniformly represent Jesus Christ as the supreme object of every believer's love, as being "precious to every one that believeth," —"the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." He is described as "the Pearl of great price," to obtain which the spiritual merchant gladly parts with all that he is worth; and St. Paul goes so far as to say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." But, is the Saviour thus highly esteemed by all who profess and call themselves Christians? Is the Gospel of his grace, his righteousness, his salvation, supremely prized by all who are called by his name? Alas! it is far otherwise. Like Gallio of old, many "care for none of these things;" and others satisfy themselves with an occasional and careless attention to them. Like Pilate, they "find no fault in the man;" but their hearts are engaged in the pursuits and enjoyments of the present world, and they "mind only earthly things." How shall we account for this? How is it that any, with the Scriptures in their hands, should thus forsake their own mercies, and lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation? The text resolves the difficulty. Here we find an answer:—"The whole need not a

physician, but they that are sick."—It is obvious to all, that a man in perfect health, who feels no pain, and is conscious of no disease, will not employ a physician. Whatever reports he may have heard respecting him, or whatever opinion he may entertain of his skill, he sees no present occasion for his assistance: and this was the condition of the Pharisees, while our Lord was upon earth. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost;"—and in the pursuit of this benevolent object, he disdained not freely to converse with publicans and sinners: not that he meant to countenance their sins; no; he mingled with them only to reclaim them, just as physicians go among the diseased, merely to effect their cure. But this gave great offence to the proud Pharisees:—men "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." They complained of his conduct to his disciples, saying, "Your master keeps company, and eats and drinks with publicans and sinners;"—but "wisdom is justified of her children." Our Lord, in the text, vindicates his own conduct, while he accounts for that of the Pharisees: "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—These men were insensible of the state of their own souls, while others were rejoicing that they had found a remedy.

These words may teach us the four following things:—

First, That sin is the disease of the soul.

Secondly, Jesus is the great Physician.

Thirdly, Those who are insensible of their sins, neglect him.

Fourthly, Those who know their true condition, are very desirous of his help.

In the first place, we are taught that sin is the disease of the soul. We brought it into the world with us, deriving it from our first parents; for "by one

man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." It is with strict propriety that sin is thus described, for it has just the same effects upon the soul that disease has upon the body. Sickness destroys all our powers of action, and deprives us of ability to transact our affairs, however important and urgent they may be; whatever dangers we might avoid, whatever advantages we might obtain, there is a total inability for action; and thus it is with the soul. We have before us a vast eternity; and this is the only season for preparation; it is the seed-time of eternity; we are now called upon to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" but while this sickness prevails, we have no hearts to engage in this great work; we cannot bear the thought of necessary exertion. Even the ordinary means of grace are frequently neglected,—the Bible and prayer, and Sabbaths and sermons, are shunned; for the sinner has no heart to them.

Sickness deprives a man of rest; he cannot be composed; he feels a constant uneasiness, an insatiable thirst; and thus, as the Scripture saith, "There is no peace to the wicked:" he turns from creature to creature, seeking rest and finding none; the world disappoints him; he meets with repeated and perpetual difficulties. This, perhaps, irritates his temper, and makes him a burthen to himself and others: to get rid of his cares he flies to amusements and intemperance; but the disease, instead of being relieved, is aggravated, and he grows worse and worse.

Disease frequently occasions delirium. A sick man knows not where he is, or what he says: when he is at Death's door he fancies himself perfectly well; and if not prevented, would be in danger of destroying himself. Thus a man in a state of sin is furiously bent on his own ruin: he will not be persuaded there is any danger in his case: and he is very angry with the

servants of Christ who would convince him of his error. Solomon says, "The heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil; madness is in their hearts while they live; and after that, they go to the dead." How do such persons fondly imagine that their hearts are good, even while their ways are perverse and desperately wicked!

Sin deforms the body. "When God with rebukes correcteth man for his iniquity, he maketh his beauty to consume like a moth:" "he changeth his countenance, and sendeth him away." The finest face may be soon disfigured, and the most lovely person become loathsome; but in the sight of God, nothing is so beautiful as holiness, nothing so loathsome as sin.

Finally, Disease is the forerunner of death. Many diseases are mortal in their tendency, and if not seasonably checked, will bring the patient to the grave. Some diseases baffle the skill of the ablest physician. Sin, which is the disease of the soul, is certainly mortal, if Christ, the great Physician, does not interpose: "Death" was the original threatening, to keep man from sin. God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest" of the forbidden fruit, "thou shalt surely die;" and die he did: his body became mortal; and though he had a long reprieve, he returned at length to the dust, from whence he came: but he immediately suffered a moral death; he became "dead in trespasses and sins," and liable to the bitter pains of eternal death: and thus, "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." This is our state: we are universally dead in sin; we have bodies doomed to the grave, and souls exposed to the just anger of an offended God. This is indeed a miserable state; but it would be far more so if there were no remedy. "Is there then no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Blessed be God, we can, with

confidence, say, "There is a Physician, and he no less a person than the Son of God;" and this is what we propose,

In the second place, to notice,—That Jesus Christ is the great Physician. There is none upon earth equal to the cure of the souls of men but the Son of God: he pitied us in our low estate; he saw us perishing in our sins and in our blood; and he left his throne of glory—visited this sinful globe—took our nature into union with his own; yea, he "himself took upon him our infirmities: he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." When on earth, he gave many gracious specimens of his power to heal the *souls* of men, by healing their bodies; and such was his power, that "all manners of diseases," —"every sickness and every disease" among the people, was healed; yea, such was the compassion of our blessed Lord, that of all the numerous crowds of sick and afflicted people who applied to him, not one of them was sent away without relief.

In the cure of our souls two things are necessary:— We are guilty, and must be justified; we are polluted, and must be sanctified: he performs both these parts of our cure; which is intimated by the expression, "That out of his side came water and blood." See the 1st Epistle of John, 5th chapter, and 6th verse:— "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." So that this may encourage us to apply to him, and say,

> "Be of sin the double cure;
> "Cleanse us from its guilt and power."

Seeing, then, there is such a great and able Physi-

cian, may we not ask, "Why is not the hurt of the daughter of my people healed?" This leads us,

In the third place, to observe,---That men are generally too insensible of their sins to apply to Christ; "The whole need not a physician." It is the worst symptom of the disease of sin, that men are totally insensible of it, or think themselves so slightly diseased, that they are in no danger; and, at all events, that a future season will be time enough. Sin destroys all our faculties; it blinds the eyes of our understanding, and deadens the feelings of our hearts; the mind is so darkened, that it does not behold sin as it is, and dreadful mistakes prevail respecting its true and dangerous nature. Let us endeavour to detect some of these.

Some of these fatal mistakes among men arise from ignorance of the holy law. If sin be "the transgression," we ought to consider, What are the demands of that law? and we shall find it requires perfect obedience to the will of God, and that flowing from perfect love to him: it requires also that we should love our neighbours in all instances as ourselves. Now, while men are ignorant of this holy law, they discover no disease; but when, as in the case of St. Paul, the commandment comes with a powerful conviction of its spiritual nature, its unsatisfied demands, and its fearful curse, then like him they are ready to die.

Another mistake respects the depravity of our natures. Of this most men are ignorant. "God made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions." Man is now an apostate creature; and it may be said of him, in all his faculties, as was said of Israel, in all the branches of her civil and ecclesiastical estate, "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint."

Another dangerous mistake respects their opinion of their own goodness. How many persons fancy

they have good hearts, good desires, good intentions! They mean, they say, no harm; they do none to any man, even while they are living in open rebellion against God, and in the total neglect both of his law and of his gospel. Thus it is that men deceive themselves: they are "whole" in their own esteem, and are angry with those who would convince them of their danger, though with the friendly design of their obtaining a cure. Others will admit that all is not quite right; they cannot say they are in perfect health, but they see no occasion to be alarmed; they are not worse than others. Besides, say they, God is very merciful, and he will not deal with his creatures severely; and if they should come short at last, the merits of Christ will make up the deficiency; besides, they design to reform and repent, at some future period. Now all this discovers a dreadful degree of ignorance; they are strangers to themselves, and to the nature of that gospel which, take it in whatever view you please, always supposes that man is in a fallen dangerous situation; and hence it has justly been called *The Religion of a Sinner;* hence too, we find that men have "followed after the law of righteousness; but they did not attain unto it." The reason was, "they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Rom. x.

Take a view of the gospel itself for a few moments, and you will see that the gospel supposes the condition of man to be, not that of one who is whole, but of one who is exceedingly diseased. Why is the love of God in giving his Son spoken of as amazing love, as transcending all manner of conception? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotton Son;" and for what end? That men *might not perish*, as they must have done but for this marvellous provision of love, but "that they might have everlasting life."—Again, the love of *Jesus Christ* is spoken of as the most extraordinary thing in the world, and as absolutely

necessary for the salvation of man:—that one must die for the people, "the just for the unjust." Our case must have been remediless without him, and his death is represented as being the sole foundation of our hope; so that to depend upon any thing else is, in effect, to frustrate the grace of God, and to say that "Christ died in vain." Again, take a view of the offices of our dear Redeemer,—and what do they imply? Is he a Prophet? Then we were ignorant creatures, and needed his instructions.—Is he a Priest? Then we were guilty, and wanted his sacrifice.—Is he a King? Then we were feeble and weak, and unable to defend or rule ourselves. Look at all the operations of the Holy Spirit, and they speak the same language; and while they hold out to us the divine and only remedy, they imply strongly our wretched state. Now, all those who are ignorant of this, neglect to apply to the Lord Jesus Christ; but some acquaintance with it is found in all those who resort to him for relief; such as, in our text, are described as "sick." This leads us,

In the fourth place, to observe,—That those who know their true condition, will gladly apply to Jesus Christ as their Physician; for the eyes of their understandings are enlightened; they see the law of God in its spiritual nature and extensive requirements; they perceive the fearful consequences of its violation; for "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Further, Their heart is softened, the heart of stone is taken away, and God has given them a feeling heart of flesh; the conscience is quickened; convinced it may be, at first, of some one particular and flagrant transgression;—but they are led back in painful reflection on the whole of their past lives, recollecting long-forgotton sins, and tracing them to the sad source of all—Original Sin. Hence earnest desires and sin-

cere prayers are offered for relief. "What shall I do to be saved?" is the anxious inquiry. "Behold, he prayeth!" is the observation that every one makes upon the returning sinner. Then indeed the soul applies in earnest to the gospel of the grace of Jesus, and the gospel displays his ability to heal; it shows us that Jesus is possessed of almighty power; it shows us that he possesses the same power that created and supports the world. The gospel also displays the loving heart of the compassionate Redeemer; it records also the wonderful cures he has already performed, and which are left upon record for this reason, that in all future ages great sinners may be encouraged to repent; then the soul looks up to him as the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent in the wilderness when stung by the fiery serpents, and ready to die of their wounds; and whoever thus looks to him shall be immediately healed; persuaded, fully persuaded both of his power and his grace, the soul finds health restored, and peace afforded to his guilty conscience.

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I have now represented the case of all my hearers. In one of these two classes each of you will be found. Is it in the first? Are you among the whole, who think they need not a physician? If so, you are under a great mistake, and a very dangerous mistake; which, if not rectified, will prove fatal. Your present views of yourselves are at direct variance with the whole of the Bible. If you look to the *law*, that condemns you because you have broken it; if you look to the *gospel*, that condemns you too, because you disregard its remedy. Whither, then, will you look, if neither the law nor the gospel can afford you relief?

You will perhaps say, Can I be sick without know-

ing it? Yes; you certainly may. Many are so, even as to their bodies; some very dangerous disease may be making a fatal progress before it is discovered; some sink into a lethargy, and feel nothing; others are delirious; and it is no uncommon thing for persons to be seriously diseased while they imagine that all is well, and that there is no danger. O, my friends, sin, as we have already shown, miserably perverts the judgment, and hides from men their true condition! Sinners are frequently like many consumptive patients, who fancy, to the very last, that they are getting better and better, when there is but a step between them and death. O, believe the divine testimony! The word of God is true, and shows you your true condition; and while it points out your danger, kindly directs you to the true remedy. The infatuation of many persons on this point is truly lamentable. If their bodies be disordered in the slightest degree, they are usually sensible of it, and perhaps greatly alarmed; but their minds are so blinded, their consciences are so stupified, and they are so deluded by the tempter, that they will not believe, nor bear to be told of their sickness and danger. May God enlighten your minds, soften your hearts, and fix upon your consciences such a deep and lasting conviction of your malady, that you may, in good earnest, cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

But, doubtless, I speak to others who are convinced of their disease; and such are apt to be dejected, and tempted to despair. The deceiver says, "There is no help for you in God: your case is peculiar; there never was one so bad, and it is in vain for you to look for recovery. But observe, Jesus is mighty—almighty to save!" Mark the words! "Able to save to *the uttermost*,"—to *the uttermost*: and surely your case is not beyond the uttermost. You may object, that sin greatly "abounds." True; but

grace shall "much more abound;" and remember, that the Saviour is as willing, as he is able, to save. Recollect the cures he wrought upon earth. Numerous were the applications made to him, and sometimes rather unseasonably; but he never rejected them; he healed all who applied to him. May I not say, then, "Arise, for the Master calleth thee?" You may say, He does not call me by name. Yes, he does; for is not your name *Sinner?* That is the name by which you are called; he calls you *as Sinners*. Christ declared that he came "to call, not the righteous, but *sinners*, to repentance;"—that "he came to seek and to save that which was *lost*." Now this is your condition. He knows it is, and he has made you feel it; you are therefore the very persons he came on purpose to heal. But you are deeply dejected and broken-hearted. This is your character. Well, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psal. cxlvii. 3. Yea, when he first opened his commission, and published the design of his coming into the world, this was declared to be one of the offices he came to perform,—"to bind up the broken-hearted, and to heal their wounds." Why then should you despair? Can you doubt the virtue of the remedy?—or the love of the Physician?—or the sincerity of his offers? Be no more faithless, but believing. Take the remedy; believe its efficacy, and give him glory.

Some of you have received a cure. Gratefully acknowledge it to the glory of his name. You are not like some, mentioned in this chapter, who were prohibited from telling any man of it. No: you are commanded to blaze it abroad, and let the fame of Jesus be every where known. "Call, then, upon thy soul, and all that is within thee, to bless his holy name, who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who hath redeemed thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and ten-

der mercies!" Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, who have been thus graciously restored from the dreadful disease of sin. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! It is generally necessary for a person recovering from disease to be very cautious, for fear of a relapse. You live in a contagious world—you live in an hospital, where all are diseased. Shun the dangers which surround you, and avoid even the appearance of evil. Study to preserve your spiritual health. Let him whose cure has been effected remember this: "Watch and pray, lest thou enter into temptation."

Finally, Let us look forward with joyful hope to that happy world where sin is not known, or known only by recollection; where no inhabitant shall say "I am sick;" but where every one may and will say, I was "sick, nigh unto death;" but the Lord had mercy on me, and healed me.—Now to my glorious Healer, even to the Lamb in the midst of the throne, be glory and honour, world without end!—Amen.

# SERMON LXXXI.

## NUMBERS XIV. 24.

*But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.*

IT was well said by the prophet Elijah to the people of Israel when "they halted between two opinions," "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him;" and thus may we say to persons who are lukewarm and irresolute in matters of religion: If the religion of the gospel be true and divine, then profess and practise it with all your hearts; but if you can prove it to be false, then abandon it altogether. We meet with many people who are so far convinced of the necessity of being religious, that they pay some little, cold, occasional, external regard to it, while their hearts are evidently attached to sin and to the world; but there are a few, we fear, comparatively very few indeed, who are like Caleb, one of the princes of Israel, whose high commendation we have in the text, that he followed the Lord fully; and great was the honour that God put upon him for so doing.

When the children of Israel had left Egypt a few months, and had advanced towards the borders of the promised land, they desired Moses to send spies into it, to inquire whether its inhabitants were few or many, strong or weak; whether they dwelt in tents or in fortified cities; and whether the land was fertile or barren. This motion arose entirely from their unbelief. God, who had brought them out of Egypt

by a series of miracles, had repeatedly declared that the land flowed with milk and honey; and he had assured them, by solemn promises, that he would put them into possession of it. What need then was there for these inquiries? But God, to punish them for their unbelief, permitted the experiment to be made; and what was the result? Ten out of the twelve deputed surveyors, returned and reported that the land was indeed admirably good; and they produced fine specimens of its excellent fruits; "but," said they, "the people are very numerous, strong, and warlike; they dwell in highly walled and well fortified cities; and many of the soldiers are so gigantic in stature, that we seemed in their sight as mere grasshoppers." This evil report augmented their previous fears: and, forgetting the power and the promise of God, they mutinied, and proposed to appoint a captain, in opposition to Moses, and go back again into Egypt and to slavery. Caleb and Joshua, who were faithful to God, in vain attempted to appease the people, by assuring them that, warlike as the nations were, God, the only defence of nations, had forsaken them;—that Jehovah was with Israel, and that they should assuredly prevail. God, who is more displeased with unbelief than with any other crime, then declared in his wrath, that these rebels should never behold the country they had despised,—that their carcases should perish in the wilderness; but that their children, headed by Joshua and his faithful friend, should joyfully possess the promised land. "My servant Caleb," says the text, "because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it."

Doubtless, these things are written for our admonition. The fate of the rebellious Israelites loudly bids us "fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of

it;" while it also powerfully invites us to imitate the example of the pious Caleb, that we too may receive the divine approbation.

The words of the text afford us the three following observations:—

First, Real Christians are actuated by a spirit different from that of the world. "Caleb had *another* spirit with him."

Secondly, Those who possess a right spirit, will follow the Lord fully;—and,

Thirdly, Those who follow the Lord fully, shall be honourably distinguished by him.

First, we observe that real Christians are actuated by a different spirit from that of the world. The apostle Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, 2d chapter and 12th verse, distinguishes between the two different spirits by which men are actuated. He says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Let us, in a few particulars, contrast these opposite spirits. The spirit of the world is a spirit of darkness and error; for we are assured, in the passage just referred to, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," even when they are proposed to him; and though they are a display of the infinite wisdom of God, they seem to him "foolishness;" and while he is under the influence of the spirit of the world, "he cannot know them;" for to know them aright we must have "the Spirit of God;" by his aid alone they are "spiritually discerned;" and all believers have the Spirit of God, who is also "the spirit of Truth;" and by his teaching they "know the things which are freely given to us of God." The spirit of the world is a spirit of enmity against God. "The carnal mind," of which the apostle speaks, unchanged by the Spirit of God, is "enmity against God," and this enmity against God is manifested both

by disobedience to the divine law, and contempt of the divine gospel; so that they who are yet "in the flesh, cannot please God;" and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" but if the Spirit of God, which is also the Spirit of Love, dwell in us, then are we brought into a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, and are enabled to walk with him in love. Again, the spirit of the world is a spirit of pride. Pride is natural to man—to every man; so that every mortal, however mean, guilty, and condemned by the broken law of God, fondly conceives that he has some excellencies which raise him above others, and can venture to boast of his good heart and of his good works: But how contrary is this to the humbling gospel of Jesus! Our Lord himself says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God:"—"when the commandment comes," —when the law comes to the conscience with light and power, as once it did to the heart of Saul the Pharisee, then Pride receives a deadly blow; the rebel falls at the feet of Christ, and cries "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he receives the broken heart and the contrite spirit, which, in the sight of God, are of great price. Once more, the spirit of the world is an indolent spirit, that is, in matters of religion; however diligent a man may be in the affairs of the world, yet how irksome to him is prayer, and other religious duties! how dull and tedious the Sabbath-day! what a neglected book is the Bible! But when we have the spirit of God, we possess an active spirit, compared in Scripture to "a well of water,—springing up to everlasting life," and rendering the exercises of pure religion natural and pleasant to us. Again, the spirit of the world is an earthly spirit; so our Lord testifies, that "*that* which is born of flesh is flesh;" it is nothing more, nothing better. While men remain in a state of nature, they "love the world and the things of the world;" they seek and delight only in carnal ob-

jects: but if we have the Spirit of God, we "seek the things that are above," and give an habitual preference to them; weighing them in the balances of the sanctuary, where all things else, compared with them, must be found wanting. The spirit of the world is a dastardly spirit. The spies were terrified with the gigantic stature of the Amalekites; but they forgot the Almighty God, who had delivered them out of Egypt, carried them through the Red Sea, sustained them by miracle in the wilderness, and promised to deliver them from all their enemies. Thus natural men are wonderfully afraid of the difficulties of Religion: they are extremely afraid of meeting the scornful smile of the world; for "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer," at least, that species of persecution: but, on the other hand, if we have the Spirit of God, we shall not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ—of the cause of Christ—of the name of Christ; but we shall determine, with courageous Paul, to glory, and to glory in nothing else but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, The spirit of the world is a spirit of unbelief. This was the great crime of the people spoken of in this chapter; and the Lord complains, in the 11th verse, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shown among them?"—and alas! how slowly do men give credit to the God of truth! How disposed are they to cavil at every peculiar and distinguishing doctrine of grace, and to catch hold of every difficulty and objection that can be started; while, perhaps, they themselves are slaves of their credulity as to the things of this world, and can receive even the grossest absurdities: but the real Christian is actuated by "the Spirit of truth;" he is "led into all truth," and the Spirit of God in him is "a spirit of faith;" he hears the word, mixes faith with it, and is profited by it;—but,

In the second place, Those who possess a right spirit will follow the Lord fully. "My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath *followed me fully*."

To "follow the Lord," is a scriptural phrase, in allusion to the affairs of men, and is used to include the whole of true religion. Thus, you know, soldiers follow their leader, children follow their parents, disciples follow their teacher; and following the Lord *fully*, is to be distinguished from following him *partially*, as many do. Some profess to approve of serious religion, and perhaps "do many things gladly;" yet they make some reserves; there are some omissions which they allow; some indulgences which they retain; and they are far from being universal, or uniform, or consistent, in their religious services. Such persons resemble the people we read of in the second book of Kings, the 17th chapter,—the Babylonians and others who were sent to reside in Samaria; "they feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations who carried them captive;"—"they feared the Lord,"—they thought he was the god of that country, and that they ought to show some respect to him; but, at the same time, they retained a superior regard to their own false deities, whom they had served in Babylon. Natural men resemble these very much in their religion: they pretend to fear and serve God, but at the same time are devoted to the services of idols; but this is a temper peculiarly displeasing to him. His language is, "My son, give me thine heart;" nor will he be content with only a part of that,—he must have the whole heart. Hear how he resented this partial kind of spirit, in the primitive church of Laodicea:—"I would that thou wert either cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will utterly reject thee." There are many who, at least occasion-

ally, attend the preaching of the Gospel; they admire and commend it; and it is to them, as to some of old, "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument;" but, it is added, "they hear thy words, but they do them not." They are pleased at church, and equally pleased at the theatre and ball-room. The well-sung hymn delights them much; but they are equally delighted with the song of vanity. They are grave, and they can weep under a pathetic sermon; and they can weep with equal devotion at a tragedy. They associate with the pious, and join with them in their public services: but their dress, their manners, their chosen companions,—all proclaim that they are still "of the world." Such persons, assuredly, do not follow the Lord fully.

What is it then fully to follow him? I would express the whole briefly, in a few particulars. It is, I conceive, To give full credit to the divine testimony;—To pay a practical regard to all the ordinances of divine worship;—To aim at the most perfect obedience to the commands of God;—To seek the fullest enjoyment of communion with him;—and, To be zealous in promoting his cause in the world.

In the first place, it is to give full credit to the *whole* (not to a *part* only) of the divine testimony; and does not this testimony deserve and demand it? God is "a God of truth;" he cannot lie; he cannot deceive, or be deceived: but not to believe what he speaks, is "to make him a liar." It is a horrid crime, surely, to disbelieve the testimony of the God of truth; and *finally* to do so, is certain and everlasting ruin. Our first mother disbelieved the divine testimony, while she gave credit to the father of lies; and thus she fell. Thus also Israel fell in the wilderness; and thus their posterity, many ages afterwards, filled up the measure of their iniquities. The Gospel is of a simple nature; it demands "the obedience of faith;" for "this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name

of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John iii. 23); and it is further written, That "he who believeth, hath eternal life; and he that believeth not, is already condemned." The Doctrines are divinely true, and are to be implicitly received; the Promises are to be considered as faithful, because he is faithful who hath made them; and we should imitate Abraham, whose faith is peculiarly celebrated, because he consulted not with flesh and blood,—he calculated not upon probabilities; but fully believed that what God had promised he was able to perform: and, if we are Christians indeed, we thus receive the divine word; we "hear the voice of the Son of God," and, as the sheep of Christ, follow our divine Shepherd, whithersoever he goeth.

Again, to follow the Lord fully, includes a regard to all the ordinances of divine appointment. This is the commendation of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that "they walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless:" among these prayer has an eminent place. "Praying always," says the apostle, "with all prayer,"—private prayer, domestic prayer, social prayer, public prayer. Indeed, they who pray most, follow the Lord the most fully. Hearing the word is also our bounden duty, and our delightful privilege: it is a principal ordinance of God, both for the conversion of sinners, and the building up of believers. Such likewise is the daily study of the Holy Scriptures: If we follow the Lord fully, "the word of Christ will dwell in us richly," and we shall meditate therein day and night. Give me leave also to say, That *attendance* on the table of the Lord belongs to the duty of following the Lord fully. Many humble Christians, it may be, through a groundless timidity, too long neglect this holy ordinance; but it is both their fault and misfortune; for, doubtless, they are great sufferers thereby. Now, to follow the Lord *fully* in all these things, is to engage in them with regard to the divine authority, with seriousness and sin-

cerity, as in the presence of God, and not occasionally, merely as humour and convenience may dictate; but resolutely and constantly, that so we may, as it were, "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life."

Further: following the Lord fully, includes obedience to the divine commands. Believers are not, by the Gospel, released from their natural obligations to obedience; nothing can alter the right of God to command, nor the obligation of man to obey; and therefore, no wilful omission is to be pleaded for; no actual sin to be indulged; self must be denied; the flesh crucified; the world opposed; nor are we to sit down contented with the lowest degree of sanctification, but rather to aim at the highest.

Likewise, with regard to that fellowship and communion with God which is the high privilege of the saints, we are to "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and to say with the Psalmist, "My soul followeth hard after God;" and after all, we must confess, with the apostle, "We have not yet attained, nor are we yet perfect; but we press forward towards the mark, for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus."

I only add to this, Zeal in promoting the cause of Christ in the world: He has a cause; his kingdom is to increase; and this is to be effected by instruments; we are his instruments, and the present is a special and favourable time for exertion: there are more facilities now, and in this country, than ever were known before; and, therefore, they who would follow the Lord fully, must set their shoulders to the work, and do every thing in their power to promote the cause and kingdom of God in this wicked world.

I proceed to the last thing, which is, That those who follow the Lord fully, shall be honourably distinguished.

How remarkably favoured was the upright and courageous Caleb! The promise in the text, made to him, was very remarkable:—"Him will I bring into the land

whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it:" and though the fulfilment of the promise was delayed for forty-five years, yet the Lord preserved him in remarkable health and strength; so that at the age of eighty-five, he declared his health was as firm as it was when he was forty, when he went forth as a spy into the land: and if you turn to the 14th chapter of the book of Joshua, you will there find that Caleb came forward to Joshua, the leader of the people, claiming the possession of the inheritance: "Behold," says he, "the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty-and-five years; even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, and now, lo! I am this day fourscore and five years old; as yet I am as strong as I was in the day when Moses sent me."—O what a distinction was this, when among all the people who came out of Egypt, who were then twenty years old, two only reached the place, and were put in possession of the promise; all the rest (more than 600,000) fell in the wilderness, through unbelief.

As God distinguished Caleb, so will he distinguish all those who follow him fully. It is said of Enoch, before his translation, that he had this testimony, that he pleased God; and it ought to be the ambition of every Christian thus to please God by following him fully, as Enoch did. Such persons also frequently receive the approbation of men; of all *good men* certainly, for they must heartily approve of following God fully; but even bad men will often commend. Courage and consistency will gain the approbation of the world; and a wicked man has been known to say, "If I could believe, as such an one does, I should act like him; nay, I should surpass him." There is another advantage, and that is, the approbation of conscience. Happy they who can say, with St. Paul, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world." Another advantage is,

that many temptations are avoided. Peter followed his Master, "afar off," and miserably fell; John followed him closely, and he stood his ground. They are in the greatest danger of falling by temptation, who keep at the greatest distance from God: but, after all, the great thing is,—Eternal Glory will crown the whole; even as Caleb was put into possession of that rest, which, from the power and faithfulness of God, he expected to enjoy. Not that the glory of heaven can in any way be considered as our desert, or the wages of our fidelity. No; he that follows the Lord most fully, will be the most ready to say, "I have been an unprofitable servant;" yet the gracious recompence to which faith looks forward, shall unquestionably be bestowed. The promise is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." No man more than Paul ever magnified the grace of God; and yet, looking forward to death, he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them who love his appearing." As Caleb entered the promised land, so shall the believer enter the heavenly Canaan; for not one word which a faithful God has spoken shall fall to the ground.

From what has been said, we may learn, first, That the true character of every man is fully known to God; it is recorded in the book of his remembrance, and it shall be published before an assembled world. It will then appear whether we followed *God* at all,—whether we followed him partially,—or whether we followed him fully. Perhaps some who now hear me, follow not the Lord at all;—they are indeed *following*, but it is "the multitude to do evil;" it is "the devices and desires of their own hearts:" but what said the Lord Jesus when he was upon earth? "He that taketh not

up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." If we follow not the Lord, yea, if we follow him not *fully*, we have no part nor lot in the matter? and if we follow him not, whither are we going? There is but one other way, and that is the *broad way* that leads to death and destruction. O sinner! stop, stop, in this thy way, for there may be but a step between thee and death! O turn again, and God will have mercy upon you!—Others, perhaps, follow the Lord only in the partial manner that has been described. O how dishonourable this is to God! Is his service, then, of such a nature that he deserves not thy whole heart? Consider what a loser you must be by this partial sort of conduct. How dubious must it leave your state! Is not the state of your minds such that you cannot certainly say whether you are following the Lord or not? How uncomfortable is this condition! Many persons have religion enough to make them miserable, but not enough to make them happy! O be persuaded no longer to act this part; but, from this moment, resolve, in the strength of divine grace, to give up your whole selves unto him,—body, soul, and spirit, which is your *reasonable* service.

Finally, Let believers in Christ be animated and encouraged by the example of Caleb. When he got possession of the charming hill of Hebron, how delightfully would he review the way in which he had been led through the wilderness!. Did he repent of his courage and perseverance? No; he would reflect with thankfulness on the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God; rejoicing not so much in his pleasant inheritance, as in the divine approbation. Let us then follow his example, and cheerfully obey the apostolic exhortation:—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

# SERMON LXXXII.

## MATTHEW XII. 45, 46.

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

THE true nature of the Christian religion may be easily learned from the parables of Christ. It was well known that whenever the Messiah should make his appearance, he would set up a new kingdom in the world; but the nature of that kingdom was miserably mistaken by the Jews; to remedy whose mistake our Lord gives us many parables, especially in this chapter, which plainly describe its true nature, as a *spiritual* kingdom; not one that should "come with observation," or outward show and splendour, like the kingdoms of this world, but which should be of an internal kind, and consist in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

This parable, as well as that which precedes it, seems intended to point out the excellency of Christ and his great salvation, in the esteem of all true Christians. In the former parable, he is compared to treasure hid in a field, which a man having discovered, parts with all his possessions in order to purchase the field, and to make the hidden treasure his own. In this parable, our Saviour is compared to a pearl, extremely valuable and precious, which a merchant, who

was in quest of fine pearls, having met with, sells all his property in order to purchase it.

We may express the principal design of these words in the following observation:—

Those persons who know the value of Christ, will prize an interest in him above all things.

The person represented in this parable as having found a pearl of great value, was in quest of precious jewels—a merchant—a dealer in jewels—accustomed to travel from one country to another, in search of such valuable articles, in order to obtain wealth by their purchase and sale. This fitly represents the man, (indeed every man,) who is searching for happiness, good, or pleasure; whose language is, "Who will show me any good?" The pursuits of men are various; but their principal object is the same; it is certainly happiness—happiness under some form or other; whether in the pleasures of sense, or the gratification of the mind. It is in the low and mean enjoyment of sensual pleasure that the bulk of mankind seek delight—to eat, to drink, to sleep: to be easy, gay, and merry, is all that the multitude seek. Others, more refined, direct their attention to arts or arms; they long to shine in courts or camps; to get a great name, and make a great figure in the world, and to obtain titles, and wealth, and distinction. These are the pearls which worldly men are seeking with great assiduity to possess, which few are able to obtain, and which, if obtained, are far from making the possessor happy. May I not say that Solomon was a merchant of this description—that he sailed round the world to obtain this jewel, Happiness, and returned after a tedious voyage with his vessel empty? Hear his own confession, as recorded in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He tells us what he had tried; he had tried mirth, and costly entertainments,

and gay amusements; and after all, vanity was the total sum; yea, such was his vexation too, in consequence of repeated disappointments, that he says, "I hated life." Vexation at his failure made life a burthen to him. Some worldly men are honest enough to make the same confession; and many of them do so when on a dying bed, and in the prospect of a vast eternity; and such must all men make when they come to die, who have not been happy enough to find this pearl of great price.

But we may consider, not only the man who is in pursuit of worldly good as the merchant, but those persons also who are *religiously disposed*, who wish to be virtuous and good, but who as yet know not the Lord, and have never discovered from the Gospel his inestimable worth. Man has been called, by some philosophers, "A Religious Animal;" and indeed it is wonderful to observe that, in almost all countries, some sense of religion prevails; some adoration is paid to a Deity; there is a dread of his anger, and a desire of his favour. A consciousness of guilt, and an apprehension of death, judgment, and eternity, strengthened by the custom of their forefathers, the laws of their country, and the example of the multitude, induce those who are not atheistical or brutish, to perform some religious ceremonies, in hope of the Divine favour, and frequently to obtain the applause of their fellow-men.

But it is truly pitiable to think how many, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, go about," as St. Paul said of the Jews, "to establish their own righteousness; not submitting to the righteousness of God" as revealed in the gospel. Many will repeat a prodigious number of prayers, keep many fasts, submit to irksome penances, shut themselves up for life in monasteries and nunneries; and others will go tedious pilgrimages for hundreds of miles; yea, some will un-

dergo bodily torments, and death itself, to secure eternal happiness. And this is the language of the person introduced by the prophet Micah, (chapter vi. 6,) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression? the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Here is a person represented as bidding high indeed for eternal life, and willing to obtain it at the greatest expense; but it is the language of one who as yet is ignorant of Christ. And how many persons, among ourselves, for want of better information, profess a cold and comfortless religion—a system of painful restraints, and drudgery in duties, having no settled peace nor joy, but serving God with the spirit of a slave! But, if it please him to bring the inquirer, by the Gospel, to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, full of grace and truth; who, by his obedience and his sufferings, has brought in an everlasting righteousness, by which every believer is fully and for ever justified,—and if brought to see that all the blessings of his great salvation are perfectly free, "without money and without price,"—without any meritorious qualifications whatever,—then is he, like the merchant in the text, who, in the course of his journeys and inquiries, meets at last with a jewel of such extraordinary magnitude, beauty, and perfection, as infinitely to exceed all he had ever seen or heard of before: and finding that it is possible to make it his own, and thereby insure an immense fortune, he is glad to obtain it by any means; most willingly he parts with all he has, well knowing it is worth more than all, and that, by the loss of all, he shall become an unspeakable gainer.

By this striking similitude, our Lord here repre-

sents the true convert, the real Christian. He discovers, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in the use of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ is truly excellent—superlatively excellent; he feels a vehement desire to be interested in him, and is ready, willingly, yea, most gladly, to part with every thing for his sake. You will clearly see how wisely he thinks and acts, if you will consider for a moment wherein this superior excellency of Christ consists.

Consider his personal dignity and glory. "Who is he, that we may believe in him?" His name is "*Immanuel*," "God with us." He is the Son of God; the only begotten of the Father; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person:"

> "All human beauties—all divine,
> In our Beloved meet and shine."

In him are combined all the glorious perfections of Deity, and all the unsullied excellencies of humanity. "Great," indeed, and without controversy,—"Great is this mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh." And, beholding his glory, the believer may well exclaim, with the Apostle Thomas, "My Lord! and my God!"

Behold him in the character of Mediator; one, the only one, qualified to interpose between parties so remote from each other, as the holy Jehovah and guilty men. He is fully qualified, inclined, and authorized, to make up the breach. Yea, he has actually made reconciliation for iniquity, by the sacrifice of himself; for with his righteousness God is well pleased; and through him pardon and eternal life are freely proclaimed to all, and even the chief of sinners are invited to receive them.

Consider, likewise, the gracious offices and characters which he sustains, and which render him precisely what we want to make us happy. We are ignorant;—

he is the great Instructor; "he teacheth to profit," and "none teacheth like him." We are guilty;—his blood cleanseth us from all sin; and, washed in that blessed fountain, we are "whiter than snow." We are rebellious creatures;—he brings us back to God, makes us willing in the day of his power, and we become his humble and faithful subjects. He is a Prince, to govern and protect us from all our crafty and powerful enemies, who lie in wait to destroy. We need a friend;—Jesus is that friend—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother; whose compassion and fidelity render him the best friend we can possibly find. We want a Counsellor;—He is our advocate, and will be our guide in every difficulty,—for he has promised, that if we acknowledge him in all our ways, he will direct our paths. We are diseased, and ready to die;—He is the great Physician, who is ready and able to restore us to health. We are poor;—He "counsels us to buy gold of him," and then are we rich indeed, rich towards God, and rich for ever!

Jewels are prized by vain mortals as ornaments. Wearing them is a mark of distinction, for inferior people cannot obtain them; and thus the wearer excites notice and admiration in the gay circles of the great. This may be thought a pitiable weakness, when poor vain mortals value themselves on a profusion of sparkling stones; but he who possesses the pearl of great price, is fine indeed: he that "puts on the Lord Jesus Christ," surpasses an angel in splendour; like the church, in the vision of St. John, he may be said to be "clothed with the sun;" and thus he becomes truly honourable; for "to them that believe, he is precious," or, "an honour." Dignified indeed, beyond expression, is he who possesses this pearl of great price!

In the days of superstition, precious stones were sometimes worn as amulets, or charms, to protect the wearer

from divers diseases and mischiefs. We know of no such virtue in earthly jewels; but we assert that Christ is the *true Amulet*; and if we "bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," nothing shall by any means hurt us:

> "We shall be safe;
> For Christ displays
> Superior power,
> And guardian grace."

Now, if Jesus Christ possess all these excellencies (and the one half has not been told you), and if the soul that obtains an interest in him will be thus benefited, it is no wonder that the wise merchant, discovering his inestimable worth, should be willing to sell all that he hath, for his sake.

He is found: and blessed is he who has found him. In the parable of "the treasure," which precedes our text, it is represented as "hid in a field;" not obvious to the eye of the careless and inattentive traveller: and pearls are generally procured from the bottom of the ocean; so that he who finds the one, must dig for it; and he who gets the other, must dive for them. The blessings of salvation escape the notice of the careless and the carnal; but "he that seeks shall find."—Here, then, in the word of the Gospel, is this mighty treasure to be found. It is the business of the minister of the Gospel to display this treasure, to proclaim its value, and to invite his hearers instantly to seek it; but it is the office of the Holy Spirit alone to lead the seeking soul to obtain the prize; it is his gracious business to glorify Christ; and this he does by "taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to men."

When this discovery is once made, then holy and earnest desires will arise in the soul, or rather *this* desire—this one desire, swallowing up, as it were, all the rest; so that he who once was used to say, "Who will show me *any* good?" now cries "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me!" He who

once was used to say "I see no form nor comliness in him wherefore I should desire him," now exclaims, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." He who, when formerly invited to the gospel-feast, "desired to be excused," now "hungers and thirsts after righteousness." "Yea, doubtless," says the believer, with holy Paul, "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; and count them (all things) but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want!
More than all in thee I find!

But how is this pearl to be obtained? It is to be bought: "he goes and sells all that he has, and buys it." We are not to strain the metaphor, as if it were to imply that, by any valuable consideration whatever, we can merit this inestimable treasure!—the meaning is, that the Christian gives such a hearty and decided preference to Christ, above all worldly things whatever, as to be willing, if need be, to part with them all, should they stand in the way of obtaining his grace, his righteousness, and his salvation: and, indeed, to say the truth, there are some things which must be parted with. That good opinion, for instance, of ourselves, which we are too apt to entertain; that dependence we are prone to place upon a religious education, upon freedom from gross vices, upon our goodness, virtue, sincerity, charity,—this must be parted with. Our own righteousness must be accounted as filthy rags, if we would wear the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Sinful indulgences, of whatever description they may be, must also be given up. This splendid jewel would look ill upon him who is covered with the deformity of sinful practices: and however dear these indulgences may be, and though the parting with them may be painful, as the plucking out the right eye, or cutting off the right hand, it must be done. We must

"crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts;" and those who are Christ's, are willing so to do.

Reputation must not seldom be forfeited, in consequence of our attachment to Christ, his cause, and his people. If we cleave to Christ as we ought, we must separate ourselves from the world; and if we do so, we shall find by experience the truth of our Lord's saying, (John xv. 18, 19), "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Protected, as we happily are, by the laws of our country, from the hand of Violence, on account of our religion, yet there is no power upon earth that can screen us from the Reproach of the cross. Men will "speak evil of us," but let it be "*falsely*, and for Christ's sake."

And shall we not be willing to bear reproach for him who "made himself of no reputation" for us? Shall we not readily part with our reputation, and "follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach?" Fear it not; it should rather be esteemed a jewel that adorns us. The cross of Jesus is our best ornament: God forbid we should glory in any thing except in that cross!

In the times of persecution, not character only, but liberty and life itself, were forfeited. Our Lord most candidly told his disciples upon what terms they must become such,—that they must be willing to part with father and mother, wife and children, houses and land, and to be hated and persecuted by all; and to take up their cross and follow him, or else they could not be his disciples. Nor did they think the purchase *too* dear. Did they refuse the terms? By no means. Like Moses of old, they "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." The Apostles of our Lord, when evil en-

treated, "departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ;" and "they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and a more enduring substance."

### IMPROVEMENT.

To conclude: You have heard the character of the wise merchant; and do you not approve of it? Did he not act judiciously? Is not gain the proper object of a tradesman?—and who blames a man for making a good bargain? Now say, Is this *your* character? What is your chief object,—the object of your warmest desires,—and that for which you are ready to part with all? Is it the world? Alas! it is vain! Make it not your portion; it will deceive and disappoint you. Even now it does not afford you satisfaction; but think, O think of the solemnities of a dying hour! Think of that awful period, when you shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. I ask, What *then* will profit you?—what, but Christ? Then, every soul will be ready to say with the martyr, "None but Christ! none but Christ!" I demand, Why do you not say so *now*? Why should not that *now* be the language of your hearts?—not waiting till the horrors of death and the dread of judgment shall extort it. O let me entreat you now, even now, to turn away your eyes from beholding vanity;—and such will all terrestrial objects prove. Behold this great and glorious object, JESUS, with his great and eternal salvation, is set before you. How are you disposed towards it? Perhaps this may be the last time that ever this gracious Saviour may be thus presented to you, or that you may be affectionately invited to regard and receive him. If you reject him now, perhaps he will be for ever rejected. How then will you decide? Do you esteem him or not? Methinks, angels pause to witness your answer, and report it in heaven. Be persuaded to take the advice

of Jesus, especially you who are young ;—"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things (needful for life and for godliness) shall be added unto you."

It may be that you are seeking ; and, perhaps, you may be seeking in sorrow ; but fear not, the Lord hath said, "He that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ;" and the wise man, to whom I before referred, who not only knew the vanity of the world, but also the excellency of true wisdom, says, "If thou criest after knowledge, and lifteth up thy voice for understanding—if thou seekes ther as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures,—then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." The Lord giveth wisdom ; he has promised to give it to them that ask it, and that liberally ;—and are you really willing to part with any thing, to part with every thing, that stands in the way of your enjoyment of Christ? If you were suffered to retain only one thing in the world, what would that one thing be? I can readily answer for every true believer,—It would be Christ. "Let every thing else go," he would say ; "give me Christ, and that is enough."

But, perhaps, you are discouraged at the terms proposed. The text directs you to make a purchase ; and when you contemplate the infinite value of the pearl in question, you say, I can offer nothing in the least degree valuable. I have nothing ; I am nothing ; I can do nothing. How can I presume to purchase the pearl of great price? You say truly. You have indeed, as was before observed, no valuable consideration to offer ; but let not this discourage you. In another Scripture resembling this, wherein the blessings of the Gospel are compared to food and drink of the richest quality, and sinners are invited to come and purchase them, the terms run thus :—"And he that hath *no money*, come *ye*; yea, come, buy wine and milk, *without money, and without price*" (Isaiah lv. 1.);

which is as much as to say, You shall be welcome to these great benefits, though utterly unworthy of them. Accept them as God's free gifts, and be content to be for ever indebted to grace, only saying "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"

Finally, how rich and how happy is the believer in Jesus! We congratulate our friends when they have made a prosperous voyage; or when, in the course of Providence, an addition is made to their wealth; but O how much rather is a child of God to be congratulated! "I know thy poverty," said Jesus Christ to the Church of Smyrna; "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich;" they were poor in this world, but they were rich in faith,—rich towards God; and if thus rich *now*, how will the glorified believer be enriched! This jewel will retain its value and its lustre beyond the grave, and will enrich and adorn the soul for ever and ever; yea, a brilliant crown of glory awaits every believer in Jesus. God grant that this may be our final happiness, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

JESUS, I love thy charming name,
'Tis music to my ear;
Fain would I sound it out so loud,
That earth and hear'n might hear!

Yes, thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust!
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust.

All my capacious pow'rs can wish
In thee most richly meet;
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.

Thy grace still dwells upon my heart,
And sheds its fragrance there;
The noblest balm of all its wounds,
The cordial of its care.

I'll speak the honours of thy name
With my last lab'ring breath;
Then speechless clasp thee in my arms,
The antidote of death. DODDRIDGE.

# SERMON LXXXIII.

## HOSEA XIII. 9.

*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.*

"WHATEVER was written aforetime, was written for our learning." Those things, especially, which were written for the Jews, are full of instruction to us. The literal meaning of the words is this:—"Israel," that is to say, the ten tribes, exclusive of Judah and Benjamin, were awfully prone to idolatry, and it proved their destruction. In the 16th verse of this chapter it is said, "Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces." Notwithstanding which, God was pleased to promise that he would be "their help;" and in the words which follow our text he says, "I will be thy King."—God himself would graciously reside in the midst of them, to rule and to save them.

It may appear to us very strange, that a people so singularly favoured of God as Israel was, should be so prone to depart from him—that a people so signalized by mercies, who were brought forth out of Egypt, sustained in the wilderness, and introduced into the promised land, by a series of miracles,—that they, of all people on the earth, should forsake the God of their mercies, and fall into abominable idolatries! But, alas! in this they were but a picture of fallen nature

in general; indeed, we may say, a picture of ourselves, who have received so much from God, and yet made so ungenerous a return. The words of the text are directed to us; it may be said to every one of us,—"Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself;" but, for thy consolation, hear this, "In me is thy help found." These words may be said to include both law and gospel; they describe the sad condition of man as a fallen sinner, and yet they open to him the door of hope.

From these words I shall show,

First, That sin is a most destructive evil.

Secondly, That every sinner is a self-destroyer.

And Thirdly, That there is help and salvation in Jesus Christ, even for self-destroying sinners. "*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.*"

In the first place, we shall show that sin is a most destructive evil; and if men were convinced of this, the great point in religion would be gained: but men's persistence in sin, their false peace, and their neglect of the Gospel, all prove they are *not* convinced of this; and we ourselves, in fact, seem to be but *half* convinced.

To prevent the impression of this awful truth,—that sin is a destructive evil,—Satan interposed with his first lie:—"Ye shall not surely die," said he to our first mother, though God had said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt *surely* die;" and in the same way, Satan has ever maintained his destructive system: it is by this means, chiefly, that he has "deceived the whole world." We are likewise cautioned against "the deceitfulness of sin;" and we are told that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." O when these three notorious deceivers meet together, wo be to man:—a deceitful heart, deceitful sin, and a deceitful devil, aided by the general opinion and practice of a deceitful world in

every successive age! Transgressors think it very hard that their beloved pursuits should be deemed so dangerous and destructive; but we appeal to "the word and to the testimony." The same word which assures you that there is a God, that you have an immortal soul, that it is appointed for men to die and come to judgment, that there is a future resurrection, that there is a heaven and a hell,—the same word assures you that sin is a most destructive evil. What was it but sin that destroyed the happiness of angels in heaven—transformed them into infernal demons, and rendered them miserable for ever? What was it that destroyed the happiness of our first parents in the garden of Paradise? Why did God drive them out? What destroyed the image of God in human nature? for man was made in the image of God; but what is he now? An awful mixture of the brute and the fiend. Now we find darkness instead of knowledge, depravity instead of holiness, guilt instead of righteousness.

Turn your eyes to the surface of the earth. What destroyed its original fertility, and made it productive of "thorns and of thistles?"—the ground was "cursed for man's sake," because he was a sinner. What has destroyed the general tranquillity of man? It was sin that opened the door to millions of evils. The poor babe enters weeping into the world, while it risks the life of its mother. What legions of fierce and loathsome diseases assail us in every stage of life—in infancy, in youth, and in old age! Behold the youth carried headlong by his tumultuous passions into vice, extravagance, and destruction. See then the man in middle age, struggling with labour, poverty, care, vexation, and disappointment; and then behold age bending under the weight of infirmities, and saying, "Thou art righteous, O God!" but "thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth."

Sin is the grand disturber of the world. It is sin that disturbs the conscience, that disturbs families, churches, cities, and nations. None will deny that it has destroyed millions and millions of the human race,—sweeping away, once in about every thirty or forty years, all its numerous inhabitants; "for dust we are, and to dust we must all return." What vast multitudes die in their infancy! What multitudes are cut off by intemperance! How many have perished by bloody persecutions: and still more by direful wars! What myriads have been drowned in the seas, or consumed by lightning, or swallowed up, by hundreds and thousands at a time, by fearful earthquakes! and O, that this, awful as it is, were the worst! but still further destruction awaits the impenitent; and without an interest in the great salvation of Christ, the *soul* as well as the body must be destroyed;—not indeed by annihilation, which the wicked would earnestly desire; but by "a second death,"—an eternal banishment from the presence of God. Fear him then, who can not only "kill the body, but who is able to cast both body and soul into hell." Yes, sin is indeed destructive. "The wages of sin is death;" and, as St. James saith, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death*." Hear also what the holy law of God denounces against every transgressor:—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." This then is the state of the case: and is it not most true, that sin is a destructive evil? "O Israel, that thou hast *destroyed* thyself!"—and this will appear still more plainly, by showing,

In the second place, that

Sinners are self-destroyers. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed *thyself!*"

What is more shocking than for persons, renouncing

that natural self-love which rules all mankind, to prepare for their own destruction the fatal bowl, the knife, the pistol, or the halter, or to plunge into a watery grave! Here we pity while we blame; and yet all wilful sinners are acting the same desperate part;—they are destroying themselves, and yet they are not aware of it; and if they are at all apprehensive of their errors, they are apt to throw the blame on others; yea, even upon the blessed God himself. Against this presumption the apostle James cautions us: "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: God tempteth no man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust." Sinners, although they are self-destroyers, always endeavour to throw off the blame from themselves upon others. Our first parent wished to transfer the blame from himself; and therefore said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." She also, as unwilling to bear the blame, said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Thus also it is that sinners blame their passions, and charge their vices upon their constitutions, or upon their companions, or upon their situations in life, and sometimes upon Satan; but unless the tempter had found a proneness in us to sin, all his temptations would be fruitless, as they were when they were exercised upon the Lord of life and glory. Alas! all the sins we commit flow from our own polluted hearts. So our Lord says, in the 15th chapter of the Gospel by St. Matthew: "Those things which proceed out of the mouth, came forth from the heart; and those are the things which defile the man." It will be found, therefore, that the blame is all our own; that there is an obstinate persistence in sin against the remonstrances of conscience and the admonitions of God. Thus, of old, he spake unto the house of Israel: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the

wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for *why will ye die*, O house of Israel?" This expostulation plainly throws the guilt upon man, as his own destroyer: "Why *will ye die*, O house of Israel?"—it arises from the wilful obstinacy and hardness of the human heart. The prophet also charges the Jews with a wilful resistance to the Gospel; "They shut their eyes, that they might not see; they stopped their ears, that they might *not* hear;" and our blessed Lord says expressly to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life;" and in our Lord's admirable discourse with Nicodemus, as recorded in the 3d chapter of St. John, it is expressly said, "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God;" and "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and that men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

True penitents will readily confess this; they will take shame to themselves, and say, with the Royal Penitent, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Yes, real Christians, under their deepest afflictions, will adopt this language: "Shall a living man complain,—a man for the punishment of his sins?" And, depend upon it, whatever excuses men now make, the time will come when "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world be found (and confess themselves) guilty before God." "The books will be opened, and a clear and impartial statement made, and the righteous judgment of God will be apparent to all: it will then appear that the way of sin was chosen, that it was preferred, and that wilful unbelief prevailed. Sinners know what

frequently passes in their own minds concerning this; they put a force upon themselves, and stifle all convictions: resolving, whatever the consequences may be, that they will proceed. Sinners are self-destroyers. But we go on,

In the third and last place, to show that

There is salvation in Jesus Christ, even for self-destroying sinners.

O what news, what good news, what unexpected news, do we find in this third part of our subject! "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" And what might be expected to follow?—You must take the consequences, it is the fruit of your own doings: but, instead of this, God has been graciously pleased to say, "In me is thine help found." Thus, in another place, where we have a long and a black catalogue of the sins of Israel,—where the heavens and the earth are called upon to witness their iniquity; yet it is followed up with this encouraging language, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The help (the salvation which sinners stand in need of) can only come from God: "Shame and confusion of face belong unto us;" but it is added (O blessed addition!) "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him." The truth is, man neither wants this help, nor could procure it if he did. Man does not want it: he sees little or no need of pardon; he justifies his offences in part, and is inattentive to that Gospel which proclaims redemption; and as to another great branch of it, the sanctification of our nature,—he not only does not desire it, but he dreads it; he has no sort of wish for it; and the name of a *Saint* is, in his opinion, nearly the same as that of a hypocrite, or a fanatic.

But if men really desired it, how could they obtain it? Who could have devised that wonderful plan of redemption which is laid before us in the Gospel?—Who could have made atonement for the sins of the world? Who could have cleansed the foul hearts of men, and made them new? Who could have procured a good title to endless glory? As well might a sinner create a new sun, a new moon, or a new world, as bring about the least part of this great salvation! But God says, "In me is thy help found." Mercy, unsought as well as undeserved, first moved his gracious heart: "He remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever." Hence that marvellous, that unparalleled, that unspeakable gift,—God's own dear Son, incarnate in our nature! "Help was laid upon him," who "came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." In the 89th Psalm he says, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty, whom I have chosen from among the people." It pleased God to punish the sin of man in the person of his Son; "He was wounded for our trangressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "He died, the just for the unjust;" he bore the curse, to remove it from us; he was "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;"—through him there is pardon for sins of the deepest dye. Yes; if any one sinner had as much guilt as usually falls to the lot of a thousand, there is pardon even for such an one, if he come to God through Jesus Christ. In order to encourage the chief of sinners, we find examples held forth; such as that of the apostle Paul, in the first epistle to Timothy i. 15, 16; —"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ

might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Yes; there is sufficient help, for every purpose of our salvation,—not only for the pardon of the greatest sinners, but grace that can conquer the most obdurate hearts, even those that are as hard as adamant. God will "take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh." Powerful lusts, though deeply fixed in our very nature, may be rooted up by the grace of Christ; even confirmed habits of sin may be destroyed. Although the "Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots," yet those who have long been in the habit of doing evil, may learn to do well. God can raise up children to Abraham out of the very stones; and the power which effects this is compared to that which effected the resurrection of the dead body of Christ from the grave.

The same grace is sufficient to preserve the soul in the midst of the strongest temptations. He is able to keep his people unhurt in the most dangerous circumstances, even as the three confessors remained unsinged in the burning fiery furnace; or as Jonah was kept alive for three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. We daily witness the miracles of divine grace, as marvellous as if a stone were suspended in the air, or a spark kept alive in the ocean. We are "kept by the power of God, though faith unto salvation."

Thus we see that sin is a most destructive evil,—that every sinner is a self-destroyer,—and that there is help and salvation in Christ, even for the self-destroying sinner.

## IMPROVEMENT.

From the whole, let us learn, first, To think rightly of sin. Here is the soul-ruining mistake of men: they are not told, or will not believe, that sin is of a de-

structive nature. Beware of slight thoughts of sin. Sin is no trifle. They are "fools only who make a mock at sin." "Be not deceived,—God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of Disobedience." Listen not, my friends, you especially who are young, listen not to your deluded companions, who would persuade you that there is no danger. Thus Satan deceived our first mother, and ruined the world. Beware, lest it ruin you. I entreat you to believe God, and disbelieve the enemy; yea, I may say, believe your ears; believe your eyes; believe your feelings. Surely, you may believe when you see around you so many horrid effects of sin, and hear as it were the groans of the damned, all uniting to say, "Depend upon it, sin is a destructive evil." In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19, &c.) the former, who after a worldly life of self-indulgence, is represented as lifting up his eyes in torments, and in vain requesting the momentary relief of a drop of water to cool his tongue, requests that a messenger may be sent to his father's house, to testify to his surviving brethren, lest they also come into the same place of torment. What was the testimony he wished to be made to them? Was it not this, That sin indulged, destroys the soul?—that sinners are, as he had been, self-destroyers? But in vain did he request that such a message might be sent. It was needless. The same testimony had been made by Moses and the prophets, whom he and they refused to hear. The same testimony is now made to you. O bear it, receive it, and act accordingly!

But there is another, a superadded evil; something, if possible, more destructive than sin itself—I mean unbelief,—a rejection of the Gospel, which will prove more fatal than all other sins; for, as we have already

said from God's word, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light;"—how then "shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" That is a question which is not answered; it is a question that cannot be answered; it is a question that is not intended to be answered. "How can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

How earnestly then should every sinner cry to the Lord for help! He says, "In *me* is thy help;"—in me,—in me *only*. I am the God of thy salvation. In vain shall it be looked for anywhere else: but in me you may find it,—in me, who was justly offended, but am now reconciled through the blood of my Son. I was angry; but my anger is turned away. Now I wait to be gracious. Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and the door of mercy shall fly open. Then shall you say and sing, "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also hath become my salvation."

So ready is the Lord to bestow this blessing, that he would have the good news of it published to every creature; he is so ready to bestow it, even upon the worst of sinners, that, when he ordered his apostles to go into all the world, he bid them begin at Jerusalem; that those persons who had imbrued their hands in his blood, should be the first to receive the advantage of the shedding of that blood for the pardon of their sins. It has been said, that "*now* is the accepted time;" but you cannot be sure that it will ever be said so again; you cannot be sure that you shall ever have an opportunity, after the present, of hearing this good news. I entreat you then to hear his voice while it is called to-day. Retire to your closets this very evening, you who have neglected it before; pour out your hearts before God, and seek an interest in this great salvation!

Finally, We learn from what has been said, that grace must have the whole glory of our salvation. We can destroy ourselves; but we cannot save ourselves. God says, "In *me* is thy help found." Salvation is invented, procured, bestowed, and applied, by God himself; and every believer will gladly ascribe the praise to him. The language of his heart will be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be all the glory!" Grace first contrived the plan; grace begins the work; grace carries on the work; grace will crown the work; and when the top-stone shall be laid, it will be with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it! Amen.

LORD, we confess our num'rous faults;
How great our guilt has been!
Foolish and vain were all our thoughts,
And all our lives were sin.

But, O my soul, for ever praise,
For ever love his name,
Who turns thy feet from dangerous ways
Of folly, sin, and shame.

'Tis not by works of righteousness
Which our own hands have done;
But we are sav'd by sovereign grace
Abounding thro' his Son.

'Tis from the mercy of our God
That all our hopes begin;
'Tis by the water and the blood
Our souls are wash'd from sin.

'Tis thro' the purchase of his death,
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we!

Rais'd from the dead we live anew;
And, justify'd by grace,
We shall appear in glory too,
And see our Father's face.

WATTS.

[*Adapted particularly to Servants.*]

## SERMON LXXXIV.

EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO PHILEMON, v. 10, 11.

*I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.*

THIS is a short epistle, written by the Apostle Paul to his Christian friend Philemon, who resided at Colosse; it was written in behalf of Onesimus, who had been a slave belonging to Philemon. It appears that Onesimus had robbed his master, and then ran away from him, to escape justice: he rambled to Rome, where the Apostle Paul was then a prisoner, and, by some means or other, he went to hear him preach, probably in his own hired house. Here he was converted to God, and became a new man; the Apostle became acquainted with him; and Onesimus was much attached to him. The Apostle felt himself interested in his welfare; he found him very useful to him as a servant; but, as he belonged to another, he would not retain him without his consent, but sent him back to his master, whom he had wronged; and, in order to secure a favourable reception, sent with him this letter, which competent judges consider as a perfect example of good letter-writing; as containing the most lively sentiments both of humanity and generosity; and discovering inimitable dexterity and address, insomuch that it is preferred to a letter of a similar kind, written by the learned Pliny, who was so famous for epistolary writing. A letter from such a man as the holy and venerable Apostle Paul, whose heart was so full of Christian piety, may be expected, though written on a temporal affair, to contain evan-

gelical sentiments of the most useful kind; and accordingly we find in it much matter of the most edifying nature. We shall, in the consideration of it, attend to two things:—

The character of Onesimus before his conversion; and

The great change that was wrought in him by the grace of God, with the evidences thereof.

Let us first consider the character of Onesimus before his conversion.

It appears from this epistle, that he was a slave,—a servant of the lowest description; one who was bought with money, and entirely at the disposal of his master. This was allowed by the law of Moses; and we here see a good man having a servant of this description in his house. No doubt he was treated, not with rigor and severity, but with Christian kindness and compassion; nevertheless, slavery seems to be incompatible with the genius of the Gospel of Christ; and does not accord with that excellent rule, commonly called *The Golden Rule*—"Whatever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even the same to them." Being converted to God, the Apostle requests Philemon to receive him again into his family and service.

But Onesimus had not only been a servant, but "an unprofitable servant—in times past unprofitable;" that is, a worthless and injurious fellow, allnding to his name Onesimus, which signifies *profitable;* but the Apostle intimates how inconsistent his character had been with his name; and indeed, there is too often a sad disagreement between a person's name and character. How many are called by the honourable appellation of *Christians*, who are really a disgrace to their profession! which reminds us of what was once said by Alexander the Great to a private soldier in his army, who was a worthless man and a coward: he ordered him either to change his name, or become a bet-

ter soldier; and thus it might be said to many who are called Christians. It is doubtless the duty of servants to endeavour to render themselves *profitable* to their employers. This man, in his unconverted state, was *unprofitable*; but now he had become a profitable man. All servants should endeavour, by honesty, frugality, and diligence, to seek the welfare of the family in which they live; and, surely, this man was under double obligations to have done so, for he had a very good master. The Apostle speaks very highly of him: he calls him, in the first verse, "Our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer:" he speaks, in the second verse, of his having "a church in his house;" that is, the little society of the faithful who lived at Colosse, assembled for worship in his habitation; and probably the first Christian churches used to assemble in like manner in private houses; and, in the sixth and seventh verses, we find there were many good things in him to be acknowledged, and particularly "that the bowels of the saints were refreshed by him;" so that he appears to have been a man of eminent piety:—and was it not a great privilege for Onesimus to live in such a family as this? But alas! he had neglected and abused these privileges; and let it be observed, that the faults of bad servants are *double faults* when they live in good families; it makes their guilt so much the greater; for how inconsistent is their vicious conduct with the order of a pious house, in which the Scriptures are daily read, and prayers and praises offered up to God! O let servants in pious families reflect upon the privileges they enjoy, and remember they must one day give an account to God how they have improved or abused them! Gladly attend, if you live in a pious house, gladly attend to the worship of God, and do not think it a hardship; do not indulge sleep when the Scriptures are read, or prayer is presented to God; and let not servants think themselves excused from private prayer, because they join, at least

in appearance, in family prayer: rather let it be the means of teaching them how to pray, and of stirring them up to pray in private for themselves.

Further. It appears that Onesimus was a *dishonest* servant; probably, he had acted the part of the thief. The Apostle says, in the eighth verse, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that to my account." There is little doubt, though it is thus mildly expressed, that he had been a dishonest man, and had fled from justice; but, "if he oweth thee ought," says the Apostle, "put it to my account,"—"*impute* it to me," (which, by the way, gives us a just notion of the meaning of the phrase *imputed righteousness*; for it is the same word that is used in Rom. iv. 16—"As David also describeth both the blessedness of the man unto whom God *imputeth righteousness* without works," and in other verses to the same import). Alas! how much dishonesty is committed in the common concerns of life,—in the conduct of trade and business,—in the behaviour of masters and servants! As to the latter, how few conscientiously avoid the waste of their master's property, neglecting his business, idling away their time, which is a real theft, though not usually punished by human laws, but which will not escape the righteous judgment of God; but Christian servants are charged to conduct themselves in a very different manner, and especially "not as *eye-servants*;" who do nothing well but when they are watched; but performing every branch of their duty "as to the Lord, and not as unto men."

Further. This man was a fugitive, a runaway servant; he deserts the business and house of his master, which was itself a robbery, for he was not at his own disposal, his person being the property of Philemon: but guilt generally excites fear; so our first parents, when they sinned against God, strove to hide themselves from his presence among the trees of the garden; —but who can flee from God?—"whither shall we go

from his presence?" "There is no darkness, neither shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Besides, "God will bring every secret thing into judgment,—whether it be good or whether it be bad." Then, if not before, will that Scripture be verified,—"Be sure your sin will find you out." Onesimus, in his rambles, comes to Rome, which was a very great city; and, like great cities in general, the very sink of iniquity. Great offenders often flee to similar places, to hide themselves amidst the multitude in a populous city; or, having lost character and employment, he might have gone thither for the purpose of committing further depredations; and here we might have expected him to have become worse and worse; but "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts!" God was pleased to overrule his crime and his coming thither, as the means of his being converted to God;—and this is the second thing we are to consider.

Let us now attend to the great change that was wrought by the grace of God on the heart of Onesimus, and the evidences that were given of that change.

The Apostle Paul was then a prisoner in Rome.—Having appealed to Cæsar from the Jews, he was brought, after very great perils and difficulties, to that immense city; and there the Lord so interposed in his favour, that he continued two whole years, and was permitted to preach in his own hired house to all those who chose to repair to it: and there, though he was prevented from going on with his beloved work of spreading the Gospel in new places, and travelling from one country to another for that purpose, yet he was permitted to write those admirable epistles to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, to the Philippians, and others; so that though there were some hundred sermons prevented by his imprisonment, yet there have been mil-

lions edified by his writings. There is not a Sabbath-day passes—there is hardly a sermon that is preached throughout the Christian world—there is hardly a congregation convened at any time,—that does not derive great advantage from the writings of that holy man of God. We have reason to admire the grace of God in thus overruling the wickedness of men. Nor was he useless in that great city; he was not useless in preaching. There were Christians in Rome, to be sure, before Paul went there; but, probably, they were greatly revived, and multiplied too by his preaching; for he says, in the close of one of his epistles, "All the saints salute you, chiefly those who are of *Cæsar's household.*" Into the house of *Nero*, the cruel tyrant, the grace of God found its way, and had its due effect upon those who were living in the midst of wickedness. Onesimus came to hear him. What could induce such a men as Onesimus to go to Paul's house to hear him? Perhaps, curiosity. Curiosity has brought many a man to hear the Gospel: and though it be a poor unworthy motive, God has overruled it for good. So Zaccheus climbed the sycamore-tree, for no better purpose than to see what sort of a person Jesus was; but the Lord, that very day, brought salvation to his house and to his heart. Thus it was with Onesimus. Perhaps, some acquaintance might have invited him to go to hear;—one who had met with profit under Paul's preaching; and it is very commendable for persons who have found benefit from the word, to invite their friends to come and hear it also. Many have been converted to God by this means. It is not improbable that Onesimus might have heard the Apostle Paul preach at his master's house; he had perhaps heard his doctrine and witnessed his behaviour,—he had probably listened to his conversation; and there is something so attractive in the truth, in holiness, and in zeal for God, that some persons, though wicked, cannot help feeling a reverence for it; yea, there is

something in the preaching of the Gospel so much superior to any other preaching, that some who do not understand or believe it, feel an attachment to it, and hear it almost against their will. May it please God to visit such with its power! This is the case with many servants who have attended the Gospel because their masters or mistresses did so, and could scarcely forsake it afterwards, though they knew not why.

This man, however, was "born of God;" the Apostle says of him, verse 10, "whom I have begotten in my bonds." He also calls him his Son: "My son Onesimus:"—this mode of expression is common in Scripture. It is said in James, i. 18—"God of his own will begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures;" and the Apostle Paul says the same to the Corinthians—"In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." In all ages God has employed the preaching of his Gospel as the principal, though not the only, means of the conversion of sinners; the preaching of the Cross is "the power of God to salvation." "The weapons of our warfare," says the Apostle, "are not carnal; but they are mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of the devil." Now, this man renounces the hidden things of dishonesty, and he shows, by sufficient and satisfactory evidence, that he has become a new creature. Let us inquire a little into this evidence.

Paul, we see, had the fullest satisfaction in him; he speaks with the greatest certainty concerning him; and scruples not to recommend him in the warmest manner. In the first place, as an evidence that he was really changed, we mention his confession of his former wickedness; for doubtless he did make confession of it, or how did the Apostle come to know it?—he knew nothing of this man; he had never seen him in this great city; but grace always humbles the

subject of it; it always leads him to an acknowledgment of sin. It is likely that this man had come forward and made himself known to the Apostle. Methinks I see him, with a bashful countenance, approaching this man of God, saying, "Perhaps, Sir, you do not know me; but I remember you when you were at Colosse, at my master's house. I had a good master, Sir—Philemon, your friend; but I have been a bad servant. I have wronged him, and fled hither; but by the grace of God, through your preaching I have been brought to repentance; and have come to break my mind to you, and to take your advice."—My brethren; it would be a great consolation to the ministers of the Gospel, if persons who have received benefit from their preaching, would make it known to them; it would render them more happy and more useful, if they knew in what manner their preaching had been blessed.

Another evidence of his conversion was, his willingness to return to his master; for no doubt he was perfectly willing to do so, and Paul did not write to this effect without his consent: he was willing to go back, and humble himself before his master, whom he knew, being a good man, would be glad to receive him, if he had evidence of his being changed; which evidence he would have by this admirable letter of the Apostle Paul. No doubt true penitence is always accompanied with a desire to make restitution. If a man has wronged another, true penitence will make him wish to undo the evil he has done, as much as possible: and in matters of dishonesty, I should think little of any man's religion, or pretended repentance, who did not find some means to make restitution. This is doubtless the duty of every man; and if the party wronged is deceased, then to his family; or if that be not possible, then it should be made to God and the poor.

But the Apostle says he had been "unprofitable;

but now he is profitable both to thee and to me." Pious servants will make themselves profitable; and let that pretended piety be deemed good for nothing, and mere hypocrisy, that does not lead servants to be good servants in the family where they live; honest, obliging, industrious; then they will be *profitable;* for a good servant is a great blessing to a family, and a bad servant is a real curse. Now also he had become profitable to the Apostle; perhaps his love to the servant of Christ, from whom he had derived so great a benefit, induced him to offer his service to this poor prisoner of the Lord, to do his errands, and serve him in every possible way:—and Christians will esteem it their privilege to shew respect and affection to those ministers from whom they have derived spiritual advantage.

Further. Observe the Apostle's great regard for this man. He calls him his "*Son;*"—he calls him his "Brother beloved;"—he calls him his "Bowels." All these epithets are expressions of Christian love and kindness to a child of God. This shows us, likewise, that, in spiritual concerns, God is no respecter of persons. "In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, bond nor free:"—there were great distinctions of this sort under the Old Testament dispensation, but not now; Christ is "all and in all:" nor was the humble condition or poverty of this man any reason for the Apostle's thinking the less of him:—"Hearken," says St. James, "my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—Oh, how valuable is the acquisition of one immortal soul!—What is Onesimus? A slave!—a dishonest slave—a runaway slave! but no sooner is he a partaker of the grace of God, than he is "a brother beloved;" yea, the Apostle speaks of him as "his own bowels:"—so tender is the regard he feels for this man. Hence the conver-

sion of one soul, of whatever degree the person is;—the conversion of one soul is an event of great importance, in the eye of faith, to the man who looks forward to an eternity of existence in Heaven;—the conversion of one soul is a matter of much greater importance than the revolution of a kingdom or of an empire!

And see how the grace of God obliterates, and blots out former offences! Paul seems almost to have forgotten what the man *was*,—he looks at what he *is*,—a brother beloved in Christ Jesus; and this is agreeable to the genius of the Gospel. "What think ye?" says Christ, "if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains and seek that which is gone astray?—and is there not joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth?—and if there be joy in *heaven*, shall there not also be joy on *earth*?" —God, of his infinite mercy, passes by and forgets all the offences of those who believe in his dear Son: it is a branch of the covenant of grace, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;" and as it is expressed in one of the Prophets, in Ezekiel xviii. 21—"If the wicked turn from all the sins that he hath committed, and keep my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall not die, he shall surely live; all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned to him." And here also Paul gives us a striking example of brotherly love. Dearly as he loved Onesimus, now a converted man, and very useful to him, he will not retain him; he is the property of Philemon, and therefore he parts with him; and not only so, but he sends a letter, containing all the arguments that ingenuity could devise, in order to serve this man, and to secure for him a kind reception. He restores him to his master, assured that by the grace of God he will become a truly valuable servant.

Now to conclude. Let us, in the first place, admire the wise providence of God in overruling all human events; and sometimes even the sins and follies of men, for their everlasting advantage. God permitted this man Onesimus to do what he did; he permitted him to run away to Rome; and there the grace of God found him out. So Joseph was sold into Egypt: it was a vile transaction; but after many remarkable events, when Joseph made himself known to his brethren, and when they were troubled at his presence, Joseph said to them, "Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near him; and he said, 'I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt!' Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God sent me before you, to preserve life, to preserve your posterity in the earth, and to save your life by a great deliverance; so now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God." O what benefits did they ultimately derive from this act to their brother; and thus it often happens, in the mysterious proceedings of divine Providence, causing the wrath and even the guilt of man to praise him.

But again, Let us adore the riches of sovereign and almighty grace as manifested in this man. Surely, it must be admitted that here was a man "saved by *grace*." By what else could he be saved? And it might truly be said of him, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." O, how remarkable is the event, when you reflect both on the preacher and the convert! Who was the preacher? Once a persecutor of the saints!—and who was the convert? A dishonest slave!

See also the genuine effects of true grace! This man, who had been unprofitable, yea, more than unprofitable,—this man, who had been extremely injurious,—becomes not only a partaker of mercy for himself, but he becomes a useful man to others; he was

useful to Paul, and no doubt he was useful afterwards to his old master Philemon; and perhaps many in the town would hear of it, and be induced to say, "What a marvellous change is wrought in this man! How did it come about?"

Some think that Onesimus himself afterwards became a minister of the Gospel. O, what a blessed alteration grace makes! and if it produce a change in a man's heart, it will certainly produce a change in his conduct also.

Further. Let pious persons from hence derive encouragement as to their ungodly relations and friends. It may be, that while I have been speaking of Onesimus, your thoughts have been travelling to some spot or other, where your relations live, with regard to whom you have reason to entertain fear as to their eternal state. Think then of Onesimus, and offer up incessant prayer to God for them! for nothing is too hard for the Lord: none are beyond the reach of divine grace.

Finally. Let this subject recommend to all men the use of the means of grace. Let it recommend the hearing of the Gospel of Christ. How did all this change happen? It was doubtless by the special grace and power of the Spirit of God; but then it was through the instrumentality of the word. We should therefore be encouraged to bring all we can to hear the word of God; and let nothing be done to discourage the worst of men from coming to hear it, even such as show that they hate and despise it; yet let them attend. Who can tell what God may effect by the teaching of his Holy Spirit! What is the language of Wisdom? "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." Yet, let none presume upon future times and opportunities; these we cannot command; but this we know,—that "now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation."

# SERMON LXXXV.

ROMANS v. 20 (latter part).

*Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*

SIN and GRACE are two of the most comprehensive words in our language. Hell and Heaven are connected with these two things, as Cause and Effect. Sin leads only to Hell; and Grace alone can lead to Heaven: surely then it becomes us to be well acquainted with the nature of sin, which is the spring of all misery,—and with grace, which is the fountain of eternal life. Much is said of both these, in a masterly manner, by the Apostle of the Gentiles, in his admirable Epistle to the Romans, and especially in this chapter. To exalt Christ was his constant aim; and he makes a beautiful comparison, or rather a contrast, between the first and the second Adam; wherein he proves that the grace of Christ was more powerful to save than the sin of Adam was to destroy; and he sums up the whole in the words of our text.

These words naturally divide themselves into two parts:—

The awful abounding of sin; and

The superabounding of grace.

Let us first attend to the awful abounding of sin; and here allow me to premise, that this is a subject upon which we ought to enter with solemn awe: all the evils that we feel or fear proceed from sin. If pain and sorrow, death and the grave, hell and everlasting burnings, are awful; then must sin be deemed a horrible evil,—for sin is the source from which they all pro-

ceed : and let me remind you, that this is a subject in which every one of you is concerned; because all are sinners, whether they know it or not; and our sins will prove our ruin, if grace prevent it not; if this grace do not abound above and beyond all our sins.

What is sin? Few, it may be feared, have right notions of it. To swear, and be drunken, to rob, or to murder, is allowed by all men to be sinful; that which either ruins a man's reputation or injures society, is allowed to be evil; but much that is deemed innocent by man, is abominable in the sight of God. Sin cannot be rightly known but by an acquaintance with the holy law of God; for "sin is the transgression of the law," it is disobedience to that authority which cannot be disputed; and if no evil were to arise from sin, by way of punishment in the present world, or in that which is to come, still sin would be a detestable evil. Yes, persons may think that some sins are but trivial evils. Such, they may suppose, was eating of the forbidden fruit; and what was the evil of that sin but disobedience against God, a defying the divine authority?—and that is the real evil of sin, which true penitents will always readily acknowledge, as a great transgressor once did, when he said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Sin is an evil, not only because it is injurious to society, but because it is an act of rebellion against God,— it is undermining the divine government; and therefore it cannot but be hateful to Him whose "law is holy, and just, and good." We must, therefore, be somewhat acquainted with the divine law, if we would entertain just notions of sin. St. Paul says, that "he was alive, without the law, once;" that is, when he was a proud, self-righteous Pharisee; but "when the commandment came,"—when he understood the purity and spirituality of the law,—he perceived that he was a notorious and guilty sinner, condemned by the

law of God. Indeed, this holy law condemns *all* men; for "whatever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that *every mouth* may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God;" and the law, thus understood, will plainly show how awfully sin abounds. Let us consider this in a few particulars,—"sin abounds."

This appears, in the first place, from its extensive prevalence. It is not a *local* evil, like many natural evils, confined to one place or limited to one age; but it is an universal mischief. From the beginning until now, it has continued in its full force; and wherever human beings have been discovered, there it has been found that sin has reigned. The Apostle has shown us, in the first and second chapters of this masterly epistle, that the whole world is in a state of condemnation; it is a rebellious universe; the whole species is up in arms against God. However men may differ in their customs and manners,—men who never heardof each other,—you will find, wherever you go, that sin reigns.

This appears also from the immense number of sins that are constantly committed. If we include, as we ought, our sins of omission, and our sins of thought, —who can enumerate his errors! With regard to the dispositions of our minds,—we are commanded to love God with all our heart, and soul, and strength; and if we fall short of this, then we are transgressors. How many thousands of sins are committed in the imagination, from which perhaps no external act proceeds! "for the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are only evil continually." Gen. vi. 5. From the first dawn of reason, through infancy, childhood, youth, and riper years, even to the end of human life, we are offending against God. We behold the workings of sin; envy, pride, and rage, even in little infants. In short, we, "are estranged from the womb, we go

astray as soon as we are born, speaking lies:" and if these evils be continued for forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years, how are our sins multiplied! We may well say, "Innumerable evils have compassed us about; our iniquities have taken hold upon us, so that we are not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of our head, therefore our hearts fail us." Psalm xl. 12.

Consider, further, the eagerness with which men sin,—the earnestness with which they commit transgression. There is sin in our nature,—the seeds of sin are in our constitution; but how are our iniquities cultivated by art! they become, as it were, a trade; "the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil;" the Scriptures represent men to be sinning "as with a cart-rope,"—"with both hands earnestly;" and what plans are formed for the execution of it! "man drinketh in iniquity like water;" and some "sell themselves to do evil." Their language is, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die;" and their sole object is to "fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

In some seasons and in some places, iniquity unusually abounds; and persons arrive at a certain pitch of wickedness, beyond which God will not suffer them to go. Thus it was with the Canaanites and the Amorites, with Sodom and Gomorrah, and with the Jews also; they "fill up the measure of their iniquities," till there be no remedy.

Consider also the aboundings of sin in the aggravations of it. Some sins are extremely heinous in themselves,—others are aggravated by the circumstances under which they are committed. Thus, no doubt, Judas, with the knowledge he possessed, was far more criminal than Pilate. When sins are committed against knowledge, then are they aggravated. All sinners are "without excuse;" but some are

more inexcusable than others; and how great must *our* sins be, considering the light and knowledge we have in this land of Bibles, and where there are so many godly ministers, who, like faithful watchmen cry aloud, and point out to sinners their danger!

Religious education tends greatly to aggravate the sins of those who continue in them; the sins of such persons are not like the sins of others who have lived all their days in careless, ungodly families: but where the worship of God is maintained, day by day, and instruction afforded by pious parents, those who continue in iniquity, abusing such advantages, are sinners of the deepest dye; and when sins are committed against the special goodness and mercy of God, they are also greatly aggravated. This is the condition of many, to whom God may say, as to the Jews of old, "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." "God is good to all,"—"the earth is full of the riches of his goodness: he opens his hand, and supplies the want of every living thing;" but, O, how is this goodness of God abused!—Let us consider what God has done for us, in making us rational creatures, capable of knowing and serving him. He has furnished us with all the members of the body, and all the powers of the mind; has spread our table, and filled our cup, and rendered the whole creation tributary to our comfort; he has indulged us with a thousand delights: the clear shining of the sun; the pleasing light of the moon; the charming songs of the birds; the sweet fragrance of the flowers; the higher pleasures of domestic life,—the attention and affections of our dear relations. He has also granted us time and space for repentance; we have received many faithful warnings, many kind invitations; we have repeatedly felt convictions of our sin and misery, with which we have trifled; we have made many resolutions

of amendment in times of sickness, which we have as frequently broken; we have escaped dangers by land and by water; we have had many admonitions by the death of friends;—and yet perhaps we are continuing in sin to the present moment!—O how does sin abound!

Sin will appear to abound if you advert to the calamitous effects which it has produced. The great and blessed God would not suffer his creatures to endure so much misery as they do, if he were not greatly displeased by their sins. The earth is cursed for man's sake; thorns and thistles it spontaneously produces; but bread must be produced by the sweat of his brow. How many are doomed to severe labour in the fields and in the mines! The mariner who ploughs the boisterous ocean; the wretched slave who toils in the burning field; all the labours and all the miseries of man,—prove that he is a sinful creature. Observe the disorder of the elements; the horrid glare of lightning; the terrific peals of thunder; the deluges of water; the sickening heat of sultry climes; the destructive winds; and the tremendous earthquake. Must not sin have abounded, to occasion these mischiefs?

The prudence of man in framing human laws is another proof of the same truth. Why are bonds and oaths necessary in our affairs? Why must we have locks, and bolts, and bars, to our habitations? Why must we have judges and magistrates, prisons and gibbets? The reason is, that sin so much abounds.

Recollect also the numerous and painful diseases which invade the human frame: visit hospitals, sick chambers, mad-houses, and other receptacles of human misery; and behold in them all a convincing proof that man has sinned, and that God is angry. Yea, brethren, look a little further, and contemplate the end of all men. There you have the strongest proof imaginable of the evil of sin; it has brought death into the

world ; " it is appointed for all men once to die ; the body must see corruption ; must return to the earth, from whence it was taken." O then how does sin abound!

Before we proceed to the second part of the subject, let us make a pause. Let us not dismiss this serious topic without feeling its weight; let us be concerned to know this humbling truth, and to know it for ourselves ; let the general doctrine come home to our hearts with the message of Nathan, " Thou art the man!" Surely, if we admit the truth of the Scriptures, we must confess that we are miserable sinners, and that, in our own case, sin has indeed abounded. This disposition of mind is pleasing to God ; for to this man he has promised to look, " even to him who is of an humble and contrite spirit, who trembles at his word." Blessed is the man that is " poor *in* spirit, who mourneth for his sin." Fools only make a mock of sin ; but those who are truly wise, have a most humbling sensibility of their abounding transgressions and unworthiness.

Let us now proceed to the second part of our subject. We have seen (shall we say we have *felt?)* that *sin* abounds : let us now contemplate the superabundings of grace. Grace is a term but little known and rarely mentioned, except in a way of contempt. *Grace* signifies " the free favor of God" towards sinful and undeserving creatures ; and it stands opposed in Scripture to the merit or wages of works performed, as in Ephes. ii. 8, 9—" By grace are ye saved ; not of works, lest any man should boast." It is carefully distinguished from that which might be thought meritorious, as in Rom. vi. 23, " The *wages* of sin is death ; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The doctrine of human merit is indeed flattering to the pride of man ; but it is totally contrary to the grand principle of the Gospel, which forbids

all flesh to glory before God, and to ascribe the whole of salvation to pure unmerited mercy.

In the whole business of salvation, from first to last, grace abounds. It originates in the heart of God, who pitied us in our low estate; and devised a plan of salvation; to us perfectly easy,—to himself highly honorable. It was God who, unasked, presented to the world that "unspeakable gift," his only begotten Son, in human nature; "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Grace is charmingly displayed in the glorious person and the perfect work of the Son of God: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich;" and because we, whom he designed to save, were partakers of flesh and blood, he partook of the same nature, and submitted to the deepest humiliation on our behalf. "The foxes," said he, "have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Such was his grace, that he patiently endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and suffered, in a manner which it is impossible to describe. Who can conceive what were the agonies of his holy soul, when he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground? or when, bleeding to death on the cross, he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In this obedience of Christ unto death consisted that righteousness, by which all believers are justified; and which, in the 19th verse of this chapter, is opposed to the disobedience of Adam, in whom we fell. "For as by one man's *disobedience* many were made sinners; so by the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous."

Thus grace may be said to abound in the Gospel of

Christ, which, on that account, is itself called *The Grace of God.* St. Paul, writing to Titus, says, "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation,—teacheth us to live soberly," &c.—doubtless, he means that we are so instructed by the Gospel. And in another place, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "We beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain;" that is, that ye neglect not to accept and improve by the Gospel preached to you. And well may the Gospel bear this name, for it is the principal design of God in the Gospel to display this wonderful grace, and to show how richly it abounds in the salvation of sinners: every page is full of it; nor does that deserve the name of Gospel, in which it does not obviously abound.

Further. Grace exceedingly abounds in the free and full justification of the sinner who believes. St. Paul, describing his own case in the first epistle to Timothy, chapter the first, and the fourteenth verse, says (after mentioning his former depravity and guilt) "The grace of our Lord was *exceeding abundant* with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." He was surprised and astonished when he reflected on the free favour of God bestowed upon so great a transgressor; and in the last verse of this chapter, wishing to extol the grace of God as highly as possible, he says, "That, as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Here he compares grace to a mighty monarch:—"Grace *reigns*, presides, and governs, with majestic superiority, in the grand affair of human salvation, worthy of the highest honours."

One idea more is necessary: it is not only said that "grace abounds," but that it "much more abounds." We have endeavourd to show that sin does awfully abound; but the Apostle says, That though sin does abound, yet grace does "much more abound;" and he not only speaks of a likeness between the first and

second Adam, but he also speaks of that which is not alike, verse 15—"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification:"—the meaning of which seems to be, that we derive more from Christ then we lost in Adam. No doubt, the condition to which God will finally raise his saints in the heavenly world, will be far superior to that which man enjoyed in his original state; and the soul, clothed with the righteousness of God our Saviour, will shine with greater lustre than Adam ever did in his own primitive righteousness.

"Clothed in this robe how bright I shine!
Angels might envy such a dress.
Angels have not a robe like mine,—
The robe of Jesus' righteousness!"

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when the Saviour shall appear, we shall be like him;" we shall be made kings and priests unto God; we shall be raised to a state of dignity and glory, sitting down with Christ himself upon his throne of glory. "Such honour will have all his saints!" And thus it will appear, in a manner we cannot yet fully comprehend, that "where sin abounded, the grace of God doth much more abound."

### IMPROVEMENT.

To conclude. Let us diligently study the doctrine of grace. "It is a good thing that the heart be established in grace,"—in the doctrine of grace; for true religion does not consist in outward ceremonies, even those of God's appointment; it is something infinitely

superior. Let us therefore "grow in grace; and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:" this will be found the best, the most useful, and the most delightful, kind of knowledge; and every one who has acquired it will say with the Apostle, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him."

Let us be concerned, above all things, to be partakers of this grace. Be not content to hear of it, as persons unconcerned, but seek to be personally partakers of it. Shall we neglect it? Shall we suffer any of the concerns of this life, however pressing, or any of its enjoyments, however pleasing, to divert our souls from this greatest of all concerns? God forbid!

——— ——— ———"It were contemning
With impious self-sufficient arrogance,
The bounty of our God, not to accept,
With every mark of honour, such a gift!"

Awfully, indeed, are they mistaken, who would substitute any thing in its stead, or put their own works of righteousness in the place of the righteousness of Christ! And what will poor sinners do at the last day without this grace? O consider that death is at hand! and what an awful thing will it be to die without the grace of God! Your sins, alas, have abounded! and will not deserved punishment also abound? It will, unless this grace shall superabound. Seek it then by earnest prayer; "seek, and ye shall find."

What a source is here of consolation, even for the chief of sinners. Does guilt oppress your conscience, and fear alarm your soul? Are you saying, "You know not what a sinner I have been—singular—excessive in sinning?" It may be so. I know that you

cannot overrate your sins; but mark the encouraging words of our text, "Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound!" and why should it not be so in your case?

What abundant cause is here for praise—ardent, constant praise! If Abraham, at a distance, saw the day of Christ and was glad, how much more cause have you, believer, who have tasted that the Lord is actually gracious, to rejoice in his salvation! Adopt then the prophet's language of exultation (Isa. lxi. 10), "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

Finally. This subject furnishes us with a mighty incentive to holiness. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The Apostle offers this query, because he knew that this objection would be started; but he replies, "God forbid! how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein! Rather, let grace constrain us, cheerfully and sincerely, to devote ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the honour and glory of the God of all grace, which is indeed "our reasonable service."

# SERMON LXXXVI.

LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

JESUS CHRIST had a tender heart. Compassion to the miserable was the leading feature of his character. At all times, we observe this in his conduct towards the children of sorrow; this was his prevailing disposition: "he was himself a man of sorrows," and he had always an ear to listen to the tale of woe, a heart to feel for the afflicted, and a hand to afford them relief. But the display of his compassion, at the time referred to in the text, deserves particular attention; for what were his circumstances when he thus wept, and uttered these pathetic words? It was at the only season of his sojourning here upon earth that we behold him enjoying any kind of triumph: he was approaching Jerusalem for the last time, when a vast multitude of people, perhaps more than a million, were in that great city; numbers of whom had come from Galilee and other parts of the country, to celebrate the feast of the passover. Having heard that he was about to enter the metropolis in a more public manner than he ever did before, they were overjoyed with the thought of seeing him, hearing him, and beholding his miracles; so that, in vast multitudes, they went forth to meet him. This great and unusual curiosity was excited by a miracle which he had recently performed; he had raised Lazarus his friend from the dead, at a little town not far from Jerusalem:—there were many respectable witnesses of the fact; it was

noised about the country, and great multitudes had been induced to believe upon him, as it is said in the 12th chapter of St. John,—"Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus; and on the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord." And as you see in the 37th verse of this chapter, "when he was come nigh, even at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen."

The acclamations of the multitude, however, did not elate him; "he knew what was in man;" and he foresaw that many of the multitude who were now crying "Hosanna!" would as loudly cry "Crucify him! crucify him!" Let us also beware of placing much confidence upon human applause; for a very little matter will turn the scale of public opinion, and the warm friend of to-day may be the bitter enemy of to-morrow. Other thoughts occupied the holy, the benevolent mind of Jesus. From a small distance, he commanded a view of this great city; great in extent, population, and magnificence; great especially, on account of the sumptuous temple that was there erected; and although the Saviour had already suffered many hardships from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and well knew that he should suffer still more in a few days, yet such was his Divine benevolence and compassion, that, forgetting himself, he bitterly wept at the foresight of those dire and unparalleled calamities which he knew would in a few years befal that guilty and devoted city; for, as he says in the 43d verse,—"the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy

children within thee." All this actually came to pass; for the Romans, who besieged Jerusalem, thought it necessary to build a wall, extending nearly five miles, entirely round the city, to prevent its inhabitants from escaping; and by reducing them to famine, and by other means, bringing upon them irretrievable ruin, so that in a course of time, more than a million of Jews were put to death; eleven thousand of them were crucified, and they only stopped crucifying them, because no more wood could be procured to make crosses; while many of those, who were not put to death, were sold at a penny a man. Our Lord foresaw all this, and he wept. But, doubtless, he looked further than to the destruction of Jerusalem; he looked forward to the eternal state of the multitude. Probably, far the greater part of this multitude "died in their sins;" and he also looked to the future consequence of this destruction and consequent dispersion of the nation; he foresaw what would befal the devoted race of Judah for 1700 years; during which, the far greater part have died in ignorance and sin. Well might he, who foresaw all this, weep! he wept, amidst his own meek triumphs; far more concerned for others than for himself; and, notwithstanding the foresight of his own approaching sufferings, as he afterwards said to some of the women who lamented his fate, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Now the case of Jerusalem speaks aloud to us. There are things which belong to *our* peace; There is a limited season in which we may acquire the knowledge of these things; and There is a worse destruction than that of the Jews awaiting us, if we finally disregard them. These are the three parts of our intended discourse.

First. There are some things which are absolutely necessary to be known, in order to our eternal peace: "If thou hadst known the things which belong to thy peace!"

"That the soul be without knowledge," said the most knowing of mankind, "is not good;" for, indeed, "it is eternal life to know God, and his Son Jesus Christ." What are the things that must needs be known? They are "the things of the Gospel;" "the things of God;" "the things of the Spirit of God;"—so they are denominated in Scripture. These were the things which Christ and his apostles had set before the Jews: and these are the things which the great God now sets before us; especially, the things which relate to the salvation of our souls by Jesus Christ. It is necessary to know the *doctrine* of the Gospel, the *power* of the Gospel, and the *practice* of the Gospel.—But to mention a very few particulars.

It is necessary that we should know our real state and condition as sinners: as being apostate, depraved, polluted, and helpless creatures. Great is the value and utility of self-knowledge, especially in religion. To know ourselves aright, we must know that we are "by nature, children of wrath;" for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." We must be convinced of our actual guilt, and that we are under the curse of the broken law; for "it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them!" We must so know these things that "our mouth must be stopped, and we must become confessedly guilty before God;" we must know that "the wages of sin is death;" we must not plead for sin, as many do, for "the end of these things is death." We must know our own helplessness, or inability, by any thing within our own power, to relieve ourselves; for "we have destroyed ourselves; and our help is found in God alone." This doctrine of Scripture we must understand as applied to ourselves; and we must be sincerely and habitually concerned to be delivered from this state. This must be the grand desire of our souls, —the "one thing needful,"—so as to induce us from

the heart to cry, "God be merciful to us sinners!" It is necessary to our true and spiritual peace, that our natural and carnal peace should be disturbed; that the security we feel, through ignorance, should be terminated; for "while the strong man armed keepeth the house, and all things remain in peace," we seek not the salvation that is from above; but this peace being happily disturbed, we are glad to seek peace from another quarter.

Besides this, we must have an acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ, as affording us the only and the all-sufficient remedy;—we must be acquainted with the Gospel, in order to know the way of peace with God and safety to the soul; and this is abundantly revealed in the Gospel. Christ alone is our peace-maker; he has "made peace by the blood of his cross;" "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their iniquities." Jesus having been "made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we who believe might be made the righteousness of God in him;" and, as St. Paul tells us, in the 5th of Romans, and at the beginning, it is by "being justified through faith that we come into a state of peace with God;" "we have access,"—free admission and introduction into an excellent and permanent state of full acceptance with God, as persons acquitted of every charge, and brought into a condition of safety and honour; so that we may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." These are some of the things that belong to your peace, and things that must be known.

Secondly. There is a certain limited season, in which the knowledge of these things may be acquired. Our Lord says, in the text, "If thou hadst known, even *in this thy day!*" The Jews had *their* day; their season of visitation; for, "at sundry times, and in divers manners, did God speak unto them by the prophets; and, latterly, he spoke unto them by his

Son from heaven." "If thou hadst known," says the Lord, "even thou, *Jerusalem!*" O highly-favoured place, distinguished as it was above all the cities upon the earth,—"if *thou* hadst known!" and may not this be applied to our case as a nation singularly favoured of God, with the means of religious light and information? May it not be said to many a person here present, "If *thou* hadst known!" May it not be said to those who have had a religious education,—who have had opportunities, from their childhood, to become acquainted with the things that belong to their peace,—"if *thou* hadst known!" Surely, to such, they should be known, at least now, "after so long a time." Now, if not before, at least *now!*

The Jews had long enjoyed the means of grace, but the season of visitation was then drawing to a close:—about forty years, and there would be a complete end. They had treated the Gospel with contempt; and, as our Lord declared, "They should go their way, and should seek him, but they should not find him."

But we may apply the term *day* to peculiar and favourable seasons, "If thou hadst known in this thy day!"

In the first place, LIFE, generally, may be called *A Day;* indeed, it is but a day,—a short day, and a winter's day; but it ought to be a working-day,—"If thou hadst known in this *thy day!*" "Are there not twelve hours in which men should work?"—How is it then that some continue "idle all the day long," when this is the great business of life, "the one thing needful!" It is said by the wise man, most emphatically, "the fear of the Lord, that is, wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding:" and Solomon, at the close of his Book of Wisdom, having solemnly and repeatedly declared the vanity of the world, says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and

keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man",—*the whole* of man (for the word *duty* is supplied), this is the *great concern*; the interest, business, and life of man.

I may say likewise, that YOUTH is the season in which it is peculiarly proper to attend to the things which belong to our peace: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." What can be more reasonable and proper than that the first and chief of all objects should have the first and chief regard? and, doubtless, the season of youth is the most suitable and friendly for this purpose. There are infirmities and hindrances which occur to the aged, who are constrained to say of their latter days, "There is no pleasure in them." O young people, consider, I beseech you, these words of Christ as addressed to you!—"If *thou* hadst known, even thou, *in* this thy day"—the day of youth, and health, and activity,—these important things!

Further. Let me observe, that the SABBATH is a very proper and favourable season for attending to these great concerns. On this holy day, persons have not the same excuses as on other days. There is no pressure of those worldly affairs which must be regarded on other days; but the "things that belong to our peace" are, if I may so say, "the order of the day;" and nothing ought to interfere with them, especially when they are presented to our minds by the preaching of the Gospel. They are then brought, as it were, before our eyes: so that, as the Scripture speaks, we need not say "Who shall ascend into heaven to bring them down? or, who shall dive into the deep to fetch them up?"—"*The word* is nigh thee; it is in thy mouth, and in thy heart, even the word of faith which we preach." Let the hearer of the Gospel know this, that the kingdom of God is brought near unto him. God, angels, and devils too, observe what attention we pay to the heavenly message; and what effects are produced by it. Angels

gladly carry the news of good impressions; and upon the conversion of sinners they gladden Heaven with the tidings; and if angels could weep (as the Lord of angels did), it would be at the folly and madness of sinful men, in disregarding the proposals of salvation. This time of hearing is an important time,—more important than many apprehend. To many a person it may seem a matter of indifference whether he hear the word seriously and attentively, or suffer his imagination to rove; but certain it is, that by every sermon a man hears, he is taking a step nearer to heaven or nearer to hell; he is either receiving a benefit to his soul, or he is hardening his heart.

May not these words be emphatically addressed to the AGED, "at least in this *your* day?" Verily, it may be said to the aged people, "Now or never!" hear ye the word of God, lest ye should die in your sins.

Thirdly, and lastly. It is a matter of grievous lamentation when this opportunity is lost.

Our Lord, when he thought of it, wept: he wept when he uttered these words: "If thou hadst known, even thou; but now they are hid from thine eyes." The calamities of the Jews, which he clearly foresaw, were extremely great; they were unparalleled in the history of nations,—the world, with all its troubles, never saw the like before, nor ever will again,—the discord, the malice, the famine, the disease, the self-murders, the burnings of houses, and falling of buildings, the death of multitudes,—all contributed to form that sum of unspeakable calamity which our Lord foresaw, and the prospect of which made him weep; but fearful as this destruction was, yet the misery of damned souls in hell will be far greater; yea, the sufferings of each individual soul will, at some future period, have been greater than the sum total of all the sufferings endured by the hundreds of thousands who perished in Jerusalem! O think of eternity! think of

thousands and thousands of years past, and thousands and thousands more to be added to their number; yea, millions of ages;—as many millions of ages as there have been drops of rain from the beginning of the Creation; as many millions of ages as there have been leaves upon all the trees, or sands upon the sea-shore! and supposing all these to have come, and to be past, yet, eternal ages more are still to succeed. The capacious mind of Him who was himself from eternity, could not but weep when he contemplated these distant objects; and, surely, our hearts must be as hard as stones, if we can think of them without feeling compassion both for ourselves and for others!

But *when* may it be said that these things are hid from men's eyes?

In the first place, when the means of grace are removed. The Lord threatened the church of Ephesus, when she left her first love, that "the candlestick (or lamp) should be removed out of its place." The lamp signified *the ministry of the Gospel in the church.* When the Lord removes the preaching of his Gospel from a particular place, in town or country, it is an awful event. How often has it happened in such cases, that a faithful minister has been succeeded by a poor blind guide!—thus also it frequently happens, in the course of human affairs, that persons have been removed from places where they heard the Gospel faithfully preached, to situations where it was not to be heard. There are many servants, who hear the word, in consequence of their living in pious families; but by and by they are removed, and either attend no place of worship at all, or, if they do, hear nothing but error; then, alas! are these things hid from their eyes! Many there are who, having no love for the Gospel, make no scruple of removing, for the sake of convenience, to situations where the Gospel is not preached, and then these things, by their own negligence, are hidden from their eyes; and, in large congregations, perhaps a

Sabbath does not pass, on which some persons are not hearing the truth for the last time; so that, though they may perhaps live many years after, yet they hear the Gospel no more! It is an awful thought to ministers,—and ought to be so to all their hearers.

Again. These things may be said to be hidden from men's eyes, when the heart becomes hard and insensible; and this is no uncommon thing. "Take heed," said the Apostle of the Gentiles, "lest your hearts be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin." Many hearers of the word become "sermon-proof." They have heard the solemn truths of the Scripture so frequently, and to so little purpose, that at length they make no impression at all. We rarely hear of the conversion of persons at an advanced period of life, who have long heard the Gospel in vain;—yet, this is not impossible; for nothing is "too hard for the Lord." Habits of sin dreadfully harden. When conscience has long remonstrated in vain, it ceases to remonstrate; and an offended God, whose patience is wearied out, may justly say to the confirmed sinner, as to Ephraim of old, "Ephraim is joined to idols,—let him alone!"

Above all, it may be truly said, and with an awful emphasis, that these things are hid from men's eyes when life is closed!—closed, alas! before the great business of life is finished, or even begun; and, O how soon, and sometimes how suddenly, does life close!—for, "what is it but a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!" How many instances are there of persons suddenly removed! some, it may be, sitting at the table, others walking in the streets, and others, while lying on their beds, who retired to rest in usual health;—and what security have you or I that this may not be the case with us?—and should not sudden death prove our lot, how often does it happen that the body is visited with such distracting pains, as entirely to prevent any serious thoughts! How often does fever almost totally inca-

pecitate the mind for reflection! Restlessness, attention to medicine, to sleep, and so on, so occupy the mind, that after all, Death comes at an unexpected moment; and when Death closes the scene, then are these things hid, for ever hid, from our eyes! Upon such occasions, no doubt, pious relations would weep, as Christ wept upon this occasion; and how bitter must be such sorrow! O thou, my wife, my husband, my child! hadst thou but known the things that belonged to thy peace! but, I fear, that now they are hidden for ever from thine eyes. This is the bitterness of sorrow,—the very "gall of bitterness." But when a relation or a friend dies "in the Lord," we feel immediate consolation,—assured that our loss is his eternal gain: I am mourning, but he is rejoicing. On the contrary, if there be reason to fear the worst, ministers too must bitterly lament and say, "We have all the day long stretched out our hands to a gainsaying people." "Who hath believed our report?—and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" But if others lament this catastrophe, how must the lost soul herself lament it! This will be the very emphasis of suffering in the eternal world! O fool that I was, how did I spend my time! What was I doing all the days of my life! How came I to neglect my Bible! How could I shut my ears to the calls of ministers and friends! What wretched trifling will this life appear, when the business of life was wholly neglected, and the amusements of sense occupied my time! Many a soul will say, "O, had I spent my time in reading my Bible and in prayer, instead of spending it in vain conversation, amusements, and dress, I might have avoided this misery; but now these things are hid from my eyes!"

Thus I have endeavoured to show you, 1. That there are things which belong to our peace;—2. That there is a limited time in which the knowledge of these things may be acquired;—and, 3. That it is a matter

of deep lamentation when they are neglected, and are hid for ever from men's eyes.

To conclude. As these are things necessary to be known, let none then plead for ignorance, or foolishly pretend that they know enough already. This is the language of many; but it is a sure proof that as yet they know nothing as they ought. If there are things that belong to our peace, and they must be known,—Do we apply our hearts to wisdom? Do we know them,—especially our state by nature, and the means of salvation by Jesus Christ? Is there a limited time in which they must be known? O then seize the golden opportunity! Why should not men be as wise for eternity as for time?—for their souls as well as for their bodies? In the management of human affairs, we seek to improve the proper season. The husbandman does this; the mechanic, the tradesman, the merchant, have all their proper seasons; and they attend to business, if they are wise men, at those proper seasons. O let us do so, in those things that belong to our peace!—let us not neglect the Bible, or the means of grace, or prayer! We have now another Sabbath-evening to spend,—let us spend it profitably; let not these golden hours be lost in folly, but, while it is called To-day, let us hear the voice of the Son of God and live.

Finally. Let those rejoice and be thankful who have attended to these things, so that the great affair is settled,—the great business of life is accomplished! O give praise to God for his goodness! Upon such an occasion, Christ rejoiced, and said "Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that though these things are hidden from the wise and prudent, they are revealed unto babes: even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight!" Let us praise God for his special, distinguishing grace, and give him glory, now and for evermore! Amen.

# SERMON LXXXVII.

JOHN XII. 32.

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

THE sufferings of our blessed Lord had this peculiarity in them,—they were all exactly foreseen. In great mercy God hides from us the particular trials we shall hereafter endure. He knows our infirmities, and that the foresight of future calamities would not only deprive us of present enjoyment, but prevent our activity and usefulness in the world; but the Lord Jesus Christ (the speaker in our text) had an exact foreknowledge of all the sufferings he was to endure; and he often dropped a hint concerning them to his disciples, though they knew not well what he meant. To Nicodemus he had long before said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of man be lifted up;" and when he was journeying to Jerusalem, for the last time, he said to his disciples, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and to the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles; and they shall mock him, and scourge him, and spit upon him, and shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again." Yet, with all these sufferings full in view, he was vigorous and active in all the work which the Father had given him to do, and never shrunk from his arduous undertaking,

though he knew that suffering and death were at hand. Homer exalts the character of his hero Achilles, because, when going forth to the Trojan war, he knew he should fall in the conflict. Far greater was the fortitude of our divine Saviour, who had in certain prospect sufferings infinitely greater; so that it was truly said by our British poet, that

> "This was compassion like a God,
> That when the Saviour knew
> The price of pardon was his blood,
> His pity ne'er withdrew."

These words of our text were spoken on a memorable occasion. Some pious strangers coming to Jerusalem, expressed to his disciples a wish to be introduced to him: "they desired to see Jesus." Our Lord rejoiced, because it was a prelude to the introduction of us poor Gentiles into his church; but before this could take place he must die; for, as a grain of wheat must first perish in the earth before it is productive of fruit, so must Jesus become a sacrifice for sin by his death, that those who believe in him may not perish, but have everlasting life; and then, observe in our text, the happy effect:—He, the blessed Redeemer, having been lifted up upon the cross, exalted to glory, and exhibited in the Gospel, he shall prove the grand attractive—the heavenly loadstone; he shall, by the preaching of his Gospel, and by the influence of his Spirit, draw to himself, in faith, and love, and obedience, "all men;" that is, all true Christians, in every country and in every age. Yes: millions of millions of immortal souls, saved from sin, and hell, and the grave, shall forsake all and cleave to him; so that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

From these pleasing and instructive words we shall take occasion to consider,

First, *The elevation of the blessed Jesus upon the cross;*—"the Son of man shall be lifted up."

Secondly, *The attractive effect of that elevation;*—"I will draw all men unto me."

We are first to consider the elevation of the blessed Jesus upon the cross; for this is doubtless intended, as appears from the words immediately following the text: "this he spake, signifying what death he should die."

And here let us reflect both upon the *matter of fact* itself, and upon the *great design* of it. The matter of fact itself is deeply interesting and affecting. Behold the *Sufferer!* He is no ordinary person. He is a great, He is an innocent, He is a benevolent, yea, He is a divine person. The sufferings of the great and noble, of princes and kings, usually excite peculiar interest. When did ever such a glorious person suffer? "They killed the Prince of Life;" "they crucified the Lord of Glory:" and if a person, *innocent* as well as exalted, expire like a criminal, what sympathy is excited! Never was there so innocent a sufferer as the Lord Jesus; it never could be said of any other, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" for he was the holy "Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot." If a person of unusual *benevolence* suffer, every heart throbs with sorrow, if not with indignation: but never was there a sufferer so benevolent as Jesus; his heart was all goodness and tenderness; and he had spent all his time and his strength in going about to do good. O, if all the objects of his tender compassion had been collected around his cross, what an affecting group would they have formed! If all the persons whose eyes he had opened, whose ears he had unstopped, whose limbs he had restored, whose diseases he had healed, whose sorrows he had assuaged,—had they all been gathered around the tree, what a numerous body would they

have been! and would they not have been ready to exclaim, He must not die! or, if he must die, let us die with him!—but the bulk of the spectators was very differently affected. Filled with rage, they added insult to cruelty; and they took a savage delight in his shame and torment. His glory was indeed veiled; and to the eyes of Sense he appeared a forlorn and deserted malefactor: yet, amidst all his sufferings, there were some enlightend persons who "beheld his glory; the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Yea, the more thoughtful among the multitude were deeply affected with the awful prodigies which attended his crucifixion; and were constrained to say, "Surely this was the Son of God!"

Contemplate his sufferings, and say if ever there were "any sorrow like unto his sorrow?" He was indeed "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" but the keenest sufferings were reserved to the last. When "his hour" was approaching, hear what he says:—"Now is my soul troubled,—and what shall I say?" Shall I say "Father, save me from this hour?" No; he would not say that, because it was for that very purpose that he was come into the world.

Consider the agonies of his soul in the garden of Gethsemane. Think of them, you who have pleasant gardens; while you tread the smooth walks, behold the beautiful flowers, and inhale their various sweets,—think of the Lord of Life and Glory, in that garden, where, to expiate the sins which first commenced in Eden, "he was sorrowful and very heavy;" he was "sorrowful, even unto death." The agony of his soul forced great drops of blood from every pore of his body. Behold him prostrate on the cold ground, embracing, as it were, the dust for us, who are sinful dust and ashes, that he might raise us to mansions above the skies. Hear his doleful cries. He had been accustomed to suffer, but not to complain; but now, he

could no more be silent. "My soul," said he, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. *Abba*, Father; all things are possible with thee. O, my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done! and again, being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly," "pouring out strong cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death."

At length the traitor arrives at the head of an armed banditti: the hypocritical Judas betrays him. Jesus speaks; and his adversaries fall, like dead men, to the ground: they rise, and renew the assault; he submits, and is bound; he is carried away like a criminal. O, what sorrows succeeded throughout that tedious night! while he was hurried from place to place,—to the house of Caiaphas, of Pilate, of Herod, and of Pilate again. He was falsely accused, and cruelly condemned! O, what base falsehoods! what gross injustice! Smitten upon the cheek,—spit upon,—crowned with sharp thorns,—and severely scourged in the Roman manner! See him bearing, weary and spent, the heavy cross upon his bleeding shoulders! He is stretched, at length, upon the accursed tree; his hands and feet nailed to it with large spikes; from thence suspended, bleeding and agonizing for several hours, exposed to the insults and mockery of an enraged multitude! In the mean time, there were sufferings far more severe than any that could be inflicted upon his body by the hands of wicked men,—agonies that excruciated his whole soul! Who can explain the meaning of those mysterious words: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet, amidst all this scene of woe, heaven appears to commiserate! The sun, as if ashamed of the atrocious deed, withdrew its light; and the rocks, less insensible than the hearts of men, were cleft asunder!—the solid earth itself was convulsed; and the graves, as if conscious they could not long retain their prey, were seen to

open, ready to resign it. Such are the outlines of the history itself, when that glorious sufferer was lifted up on the cross!

But what could be the design of all this? Is there not something greatly mysterious in it, that such a person should suffer,—and suffer in such a manner? The Gospel affords a key to the whole. It tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;" it tells us, that one man must die for the people, "the just for the unjust;" that if man be pardoned, a satisfaction must be made;—and who could make it but the Son of God himself? For this purpose he voluntarily engaged. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The sacrifice is made. "It is finished!" said the expiring Saviour; and it is accepted; for, lo! he rises from the dead, and ascends into heaven. God is well pleased;—so pleased, that he commands this Gospel of his dear Son to be made known to the whole world; he commissions his servants to go and proclaim it to every creature under heaven; he furnishes them with miraculous powers to enable them to do it. They proclaim "peace by Jesus Christ," wherever they go; and invite the greatest sinners to come to God through him; assuring them that "whosoever cometh to the Father by him, shall not be cast out," but be accepted, pardoned, and saved. Thus it was that "he was lifted up;" and by this elevation he draws men unto him: which is

*The second thing* we were to contemplate. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." To the carnal eye there was nothing at all attractive in the original spectacle. Men saw nothing at Calvary but ignominy, and suffering, and disgrace; and notwithstanding the miracles with which the first Gospel ministers proclaimed the word, how was it

received? To the Jews it was a stumbling-block! to the Greeks it was foolishness!—Men, in general, saw no beauty nor glory in a crucified Saviour; they were rather disgusted, and rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Nevertheless, the cross of Christ is that grand engine which God himself hath planted, and by which he will effectually draw millions of souls to himself,—even all whom he hath ordained to everlasting life:—and "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—Not indeed all individuals; for all are not drawn: but all sorts of men, and in all ages, and in all countries whithersoever his Gospel is carried.—"I will draw *all* men unto me."

This expression reminds us of our distance and alienation from the great and blessed God. We are far from God; but we are not at all inclined to return to him: there is an aversion of heart; "the carnal mind," sad to say! "is enmity against God;" and the language of it is, even to the blessed God himself, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:"—and from this dangerous distance we never can be restored, but by the special grace of God. So our Lord speaks in the sixth chapter of this Gospel, in the forty-fourth verse, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day." And, in another place, he says, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." The fact is, they *cannot*, because they *will* not: the fault is in the will; and this is extremely criminal; it is a desperate criminality of heart that keeps men at a distance from God, and keeps them from him when there is such an attractive spectacle as this exhibited to their view.

Further. The expression "drawing," denotes the sweet, persuasive, and powerful manner in which souls are brought to Christ. It is expressed in similar

phraseology by the prophet Hosea: "I drew them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love."

To an enlightened mind, and to a renewed heart, nothing can appear so rational, so desirable, so beneficial, so delightful, as a compliance with the commands of the Gospel. In the common occurrences of human life, men are attracted by interest or by pleasure; they are very ready to embrace measures that promise them safety and profit: and should it not be so in religion too? The first attraction in religion is SAFETY. In imminent danger, men catch eagerly at the first means of deliverance. If a house be on fire, how gladly will the inhabitants adopt the readiest means of escape! If a person be in danger of drowning, he will eagerly catch fast hold of any thing that is at hand, and never quit his grasp but with safety or with death. If the body be dangerously diseased, how welcome are skilful advice and potent medicines! for "all that a man hath he will give for his life;"—and should men give less for their souls? No; not when they are brought in earnest to cry "What shall I do to be saved?" And when that cry is heard in heaven,—ready is the answer that is given—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Christ, the great Deliverer, is at hand, able and ready to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him.

This was strikingly illustrated by our blessed Lord, when he conferred with Nicodemus, and said (in the third of John and fourteenth verse), "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Israelites, stung with fiery serpents, were in imminent danger of death. They were told that safety, and health, and life, might be obtained, by one look at the appointed object. They looked, and lived. In like

manner, the convinced sinner gladly turns to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is invited so to do; and he is always welcome when he applies; nor shall any one look to the Saviour in vain.

Again, not only safety, but PLEASURE, is a powerful attractive. The love of pleasure is universal; every person born into the world possesses it; but, alas! it is the love of *sinful pleasures* that proves the ruin of all mankind; but in the Gospel, there are offered to us pleasures that are pure, that are cheap, that are lasting: "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness; all her paths are peace;" even "the peace that passeth all understanding,"—"the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory;—the hope that maketh not ashamed." These are freely offered to us in the Gospel; the delights of communion with God, the pleasure of reading his word, attending his house and ordinances, and enjoying communion with his people. These, and many, many more pleasures, are offered to us; and these are strongly attractive to all those who are taught of God.

There is also something that is sweetly attractive in the condescension and benevolence of our superiors. When persons far above us in rank show a disinterested concern for our welfare, and are willing to take pains, and deny themselves, to confer a favour upon us, it powerfully attracts the soul, and excites grateful feelings in every generous mind. And thus also it is in religion. Behold an instance of it *in* the woman, of whom you read in the seventh chapter of St. Luke, who followed our Lord to the house of the Pharisee; and there, we find, she plentifully watered the feet of our blessed Lord with the tears of penitence and gratitude; she also anointed them with rich and odoriferous ointment, attracting the notice of all who were in the house, and exciting the resentment of the proud, self-righteous Pharisee: but our blessed Lord vindicates and commends her conduct,

and says, "I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much."—This it is that accounts for the active services and energies of the ministers of God in all ages, who most gladly spend and are spent in the service, and for the glory of their divine Lord. When St. Paul speaks of his own labours and sufferings, with those also of his companions, he says, "We are troubled on every side; we are perplexed, we are persecuted; we are delivered to death for Jesus' sake." Yet all this was calmly endured and joyfully suffered! And why was all this? How could it be accounted for? He tells us, "The love of Christ constraineth us; for we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and it was for this end, that we should not hereafter live to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again."

And here, likewise, is the centre of Christian communion. This accounts for that harmony and concord which, in the greatest and best respects, is found among all the followers of Christ, however varied their denominations may be; because it is one and the same great object that has attracted them all, and brought them all together. "When Shiloh comes," said the prophet, "to him shall the gathering of the people be." He is the root of Jesse, and to him shall the Gentiles be assembled; yea, according to the promise, "He shall gather together in one, all things, in heaven and in earth."

Here, then, is a brief summary of the religion of Jesus Christ; Christ lifted up, upon the cross, as our atoning sacrifice; and the blessed effects of this upon the hearts of all believers—"If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me."

Now, let us inquire, What do we know of this attraction? Let me entreat every one of you to ask the question—I have heard of this attraction; what do I know of it? Am I one of those so drawn? All men

are drawn by something apparently good,---by pleasure or by interest, or by wisdom, but chiefly by the world; this is the great magnet: there are few comparatively that are drawn to Christ, but multitudes are drawn away from him; and for what? for what, I ask, do you neglect Jesus? Think, O think in time, how much you will hereafter need him; anticipate the solemn hour, when you must die; nor think it a melancholy business to anticipate it; for it will come, it will surely come; and unless you have been drawn to Jesus, how awful will that hour be! When flesh and heart are failing, what will you do without Christ? You may do without him *now;* in the midst of your worldly engagements and pleasures, you may contrive to fill up your time, thoughtless of Christ and salvation; but what will you do when you come to die? What will you do when you are called to stand at the bar of God? If he be not your friend, better had it been for you that you had never been born. Turn away your eyes, then, from beholding vanity. Turn them to the blessed Jesus: "Behold the Lamb of God," who is now evidently set before you as a crucified Saviour. At this moment his language is, "Look unto me, and ye shall be saved, all the ends of the earth."

I would now say, What a glorious object is a crucified Saviour! Let mistaken men, let sensualists, let rationalists, pour contempt upon the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; but here will our hearts fix, nor shall conspiring worlds be able to drive us thence. Here will we live; here will we die. It is here we find every religious advantage—every thing we can desire. Do we want pardon?—He who hung on the cross is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." Do we want peace?—Like them of old, we "look unto him, and are lightened." Do we wish to feel

godly sorrow in our hearts?—"We look to him who was pierced, and we mourn; we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes." Do we desire victory over sin?—Only he who died *for* sin, can strengthen us to die *to* it; and "he will subdue our iniquities." One look at Jesus will prove, as one said, "both law and Gospel to us." Do we want Heaven itself, or hope for its happiness?—There, even there, will Jesus be the grand attractive object; and the essence of the heavenly glory will consist in "seeing him as he is;" in seeing "the Lamb that once was slain;" but who is now "the Lamb in the midst of the throne;" and there shall we be with him, where he is, and behold his glory. Well, then, may we most cordially unite with the Apostle of the Gentiles, and say, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory everlasting! Amen.

# SERMON LXXXVIII.

JOHN I. 13.

*Which were* BORN, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but* OF GOD.

ONE of the most plain and important doctrines revealed in the word of God, is that of the guilty and dangerous state of man, as a fallen creature. The testimony of the Scripture is, That "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" that "the whole world is guilty before God;" that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," those only excepted who are "born of God."—This is the true state of man; of every man by nature: but God, of his infinite mercy, "remembered us in our low estate," and devised means for our deliverance. He determined to send both his SON and his SPIRIT into the world. He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to be a propitiation for our sins:" he also gave his Holy Spirit for the purpose of changing our natural dispositions, enabling us to "die unto sin, and liveun to righteousness;" that so we may serve him in this world, and "be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Both these gifts are equally requisite: the former respects justification; the latter respects sanctification, or the habit and disposition of our souls towards him.

This change, in Scripture, is represented as a *very great change;* not a partial, but a universal change; not merely an external, but an internal change. It is such a change as is properly called "a new birth"—

a resurrection from the dead—a new creation. The term whereby it is usually described in Scripture is Regeneration, or the New Birth.

One of the most memorable passages in which this doctrine is maintained, is in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel; where we read of a conversation between our blessed Saviour and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. In that discourse the nature of the change is explained, the necessity of it insisted upon, and the objections to it are answered; and while the world endures, this passage will continue to be an impregnable fortress, in which this grand truth will be preserved. From this scripture it appears that religion is a supernatural change of the heart of man; or, as it is most strikingly expressed in the words of our text, a being *born of God.*

But at various times certain Divines have maintained that regeneration is merely baptism with water; that every person duly baptized is born again; and that no other regeneration is to be expected in this world.

One of these Divines expresses himself in the following manner:—"Those who are baptized are immediately translated from the curse of Adam to the grace of Christ. The original guilt which they brought into the world is mystically washed away, and they receive the forgiveness of all the sins they may themselves have committed; they become reconciled to God, partakers of the Holy Ghost, and heirs of eternal happiness. They acquire a new name, a new hope, a new faith, a new rule."

The same author further says, that "all those expressions— regeneration—born of water and of the Spirit—begotten again to a lively hope—born again not of corruptible seed, &c.—all relate to the simple act once performed on every individual."

And again, "the word *Regeneration* is in the Scrip-

ture sólely and exclusively applied to the one immediate effect of Baptism once administered, and is nèver used synonymously to the repentance or reformation of Christians, or to express any operation of the Holy Ghost upon the human mind subsequent to baptism."

Another Divine has more recently published, in the form of a cheap tract, which has been widely circulated with the sanction of eminent nàmes, sentiments of the same description.

This author says, that "in baptism a supernatural grace is conferred—a new principle put into us—a new principle of life and action, even the Spirit of grace,—the sanctification of the Spirit, which makes us heirs of salvation, and entitles us to eternal life;" and this, he adds, "extends to every one to whom baptism is rightly administered,—that to deny this, is to deny its sacramental character,—is heresy,—is, in some sense, doing despite to the Spirit of grace;" and that "no other regeneration is possible in this world."

These sentiments, I conceive, are extremely erroneous, and highly dangerous to the souls of men; leading them to rest in "a form of godliness," and keeping them from seeking those influences of the Holy Ghost, to which, in Scripture, every thing that is truly good in experience and practice is ascribed.

It appears, therefore, to me, that a serious consideration of the text will tend to expose the fallacy of the opinions just stated; and show that the change we plead for is something more, something far greater, than baptism by water.

From this text, I make this simple observation, that

All real Christians are born of God.

This agrees with what our Lord says in his discourse with Nicodemus, in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, the third and following verses:—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In the margin, it is "*born from above.*" And in the fifth verse, our

Lord says, in answer to the objection of Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What is meant by being "born of water and of the Spirit," I shall explain by and by; but our Lord chiefly insists upon being "born of the Spirit." In the 8th verse, he says "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We cannot doubt, I think, that being "born of the Spirit," means the same as being "born of God," in the text. It is a birth, *spiritual, heavenly, and divine* in its nature; and is carefully distinguished, in the words of the text, from every other kind of birth.

The Apostle in the text affirms, That all believers are born, "*not of blood*," "nor of the will *of the flesh*," "nor of the *will of man, but* OF GOD." "Not of blood;" by which, I apprehend, is meant, not by a natural descent from Abraham, in which the Jews trusted and boasted; and in which St. Paul once trusted—when he was in a natural state, while neither they nor he resembled their ancestor, nor "walked in the steps of his faith." Nor is this birth to be ascribed to "the blood of circumcision;" on which also the Jews placed much dependence; just as nominal Christians now do upon baptism, not regarding the circumcision of the heart; and of this the Apostle speaks decidedly, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Romans: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly;* and circumcision is that of the *heart*, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." May this passage be seriously considered by those who believe that external baptism is enough; and that the internal baptism of the Spirit is unnecessary.

Again: it is said, "not of the flesh:"—this inward and spiritual change is not derived from our natural parents; is not to be ascribed to their piety, their prayers, their good advice, or good wishes for their offspring; for all these, alas! too frequently fail. Nor is it to be ascribed to the virtue of any ceremonial observances, which are sometimes called *flesh*, even the appointments of God, of an external kind, when depended upon to the neglect of their spiritual design. St. Paul alludes to these, when he speaks of that "confidence in the flesh" which he once had, when he was in a natural state. (Phil. 3.)

It is further said in our text, "not of the will of man;"—not from any innate principle of man; not from any goodness of our own hearts, nor from the eloquence of man; the most powerful arguments of the most holy and zealous ministers of the Gospel may be unavailing; they may be "instructors;" but without the Spirit of God, they cannot be "fathers" in Christ. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but the increase is of God.

Having stated, then, that it is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, he affirms that it is "of God;" he ascribes this new nature to the will and power of God. It is of his own free, sovereign will, as St. James expresses it (ch. i. 18.); "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."

And the expression "born of God," certainly denotes the holy effect of this spiritual change; for to be "born of God," must signify being made "the partaker of a divine nature." As children partake of the same nature with their parents, so he that is born of God must be a partaker of "a divine nature," as it is affirmed by St. Peter (2 Pet. i. 4.); "Whereby are given unto us great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of a divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through

lust."—Surely, all this must denote something far more and greater than baptism.

We shall now produce from Scripture certain effects of this divine birth, and then let it be fairly examined, whether they are always found in persons who have been baptized.

In the first place. All those who are born of God have received Christ.

The text refers to such persons, as in the twelfth verse of this chapter: "To as many as *received him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that *believe on his name*." Here it is affirmed that all who are born of God *receive Jesus Christ:* and it is as much the character of believers *now* to receive Jesus Christ as it was then. He is set before us in the Gospel; he is exhibited, proposed, and tendered to us as an all-sufficient Saviour, who by his obedience unto death, has brought in everlasting righteousness:—and in Romans v. 11, we are said to "rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have *received the atonement*." Believing in Jesus is an evidence of being born of God; as also, saith the apostle John, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Now, can all this be said of every baptized person? Do not many such persons reject, not receive, Christ? Do not many substitute their own merits, in the room of the righteousness of Christ,—not submitting to his righteousness? Do they not refuse to submit to his instructions as the great Teacher, preferring the dictates of their own judgment, and the opinions of a mistaken world? and do not the unholy lives of many declare that they reject him as a king, and will not suffer him to reign over them?

Secondly. It is affirmed in 1 John iii. 9, that "whosoever is born of God, doth not *commit sin;* for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" that is, because he partakes of a

divine nature by means of his new birth. By "*committing* sin," we are to understand living *habitually* in sin; for "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not:" but believers do not make, as it were, a trade of sin; or live in the wilful habitual practice of it, being "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. i. 23.)

But can it be said of the bulk of professing Christians,—of baptized persons,—that they "do not commit sin?" We are constrained to believe the contrary.

Thirdly. It is testified by the apostle John (1 Ep. v. 4.) that "all who are born of God *overcome the world.*" And in another place it is written, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith."—Believers, that is, persons born of God, are enabled to conquer the pleasures and allurements of this world; faith realizes the great invisibles of eternity, so that the most splendid things of time appear like the baubles and toys of children. So Moses, when he might have commanded the honours and pleasures of the Egyptian court, renounced them all, and chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" like the apostle Paul, who said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Nor can the frowns of the world appal the true believer. It is a certain truth, that "all who live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." In most ages of the church, the people of God have been called to endure fines, imprisonment, racks, torture and flames, for the sake of Jesus Christ; but still they were more than conquerors through him that loved them.

But is this the character of all baptized Christians? Do we not see them thronging the broad road that leads to destruction? Has their Baptism changed the

disposition of their hearts, so that they do not love the world, nor the things of the world? Are they not profane, drunken, and lewd—lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?

Once more. Fourthly. That the great change of which we speak, the new birth, is somewhat infinitely superior to baptism, appears from its being always represented in Scripture as *effected by the special power of God*, particularly in Eph. i. 18—20. St. Paul, writing to the Christians at Ephesus, compares the power of divine grace, which had changed their hearts, to the "mighty power exerted on the body of Christ when he was raised from the dead." It is therefore called a *resurrection*, as well as a regeneration. "You hath he *quickened*," says the Apostle to the Ephesians, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." And, in another place, it is said, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Sometimes it is termed "A creation,"—which must doubtless be the work of God, as St. Paul speaks: "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*," or "a new creation;" and the same sentiment is expressed by "taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh." But is it possible that the application of water to the body should produce such a change? Do we not see multitudes of baptized persons, who have not had the heart of stone removed? Is it not evident, then, that to be "born of God," or, to be "a new creature," must signify something more and greater than to be baptized with water?

I shall now make an observation or two, and then hasten to a conclusion. It is pleaded by the advocates for baptismal regeneration, that our Lord says, John iii. 5. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of *water and of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." It should be noticed, that when our Lord uttered these words, Baptism, as a

Christian ordinance, had not been instituted, though the baptism of John was generally practised; but it is not likely that our Lord would insist in this solemn manner on the absolute necessity of baptism, when as yet it was not ordained by Christ himself. The most natural interpretation of being "born of *water* and of the *Spirit*" is, that the grace of God purifies the soul, as water cleanses the body. In like manner it was predicted of Christ, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*;" that is, the grace of God, the Spirit, shall operate on your souls like fire,—consuming the dross of corruption in your natures. Besides, there is no more reason to suppose that baptism is always accompanied by the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost, than that in the Lord's Supper every communicant is made a partaker of the body and blood of Christ, to his spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Doubtless, it is too often received in an unworthy, and therefore fruitless, manner.

Besides, if persons will maintain, as the authors I have alluded to do, that being born of water and of the Spirit necessarily signifies baptism, what will be the consequence? I conceive, nothing less than the eternal damnation of every one that is not baptized; for Christ solemnly declares, that "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God;" and if baptism be regeneration, then it follows, that if a person be not baptized, he cannot be saved. But who will venture to assert this? If children, for instance, are not baptized, it is generally the neglect of their parents; and will any person dare to assert that children shall be condemned for this fault of their parents?

Besides, there is a great number of pious persons who conscientiously reject infant baptism, and think that none but adults ought to be baptized; nevertheless, their own baptism is deferred, perhaps from an unfounded fear that they are not proper subjects of

baptism, in the same manner as many abstain from the Lord's table; but shall they therefore be condemned? and would it not be uncharitable in the extreme to say they are not born of God, but are the children of the Devil, because water has not been applied to them? There is another class of Christians who reject baptism altogether, and the Lord's Supper too. I do not plead for such an opinion or practice; but must they therefore be doomed to destruction? They must, if baptism be regeneration; for, on that principle, the unbaptized are unregenerated, and the unregenerate cannot be saved.

Another text is pressed into this service. We are referred to Titus iii. 5, where we read of "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and some maintain that baptism is here intended, and that it is the renewing of the Holy Ghost; especially, say they, as the word *washing* may be rendered *laver;* but it is by no means certain that here is any allusion at all to baptism; and if there be any allusion to the laver used by the Jewish priests, it is merely to show that as water purifies the body, so the Spirit of Christ purifies the soul. The latter sentence, "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," is explanatory of the former, and the plain meaning is, "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, *even* the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Antiquity is also pleaded for the purpose of proving that baptism is regeneration. It is freely admitted, that some of the early writers, called the Fathers, in the second and following centuries, did speak in this manner. But this may be readily accounted for. Such was the state of the world at that time, and such the danger of making a public profession of Christianity, that it was charitably concluded that all adult persons, coming forward by baptism to profess themselves Christians, were sincere; and therefore, it was presumed that the baptized were regenerated, and this led

them to call the *sign* by the name of the thing signified; baptism being an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace.

In like manner many of the ancient writers call baptism *illumination;* and baptized persons, the illuminated; not that they supposed the minds of men to be illuminated by the rite of baptism; but they charitably concluded that the baptized were illuminated. But all this does not make it necessary to suppose that baptism and regeneration are the same thing. The fact is, they called the *sign* by the name of the thing signified; and the consequence has been injurious.

We also freely admit, that in an *external* and *ecclesiastical* sense, baptized persons may be said to be regenerate. Converts from the Heathen, the Jewish, and the Mahometan world, are, by baptism, *christianized*, or, as it is vulgarly called, *christened*—regularly devoted to Christ; they assume a Christian profession; they are "baptized unto Christ," as Israel was "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and by the sea." But it is dangerous in the extreme to maintain, that no other regeneration is necessary than that which is external in baptism; it remains to baptized, as well as to unbaptized persons, an unchangeable and solemn truth, "Ye must be born again."

I shall close this discourse with a passage from Dr. Doddridge, in his sermon upon regeneration, which is worthy of the most serious consideration: "And though persons are taught to speak of their state, in consequence of baptism, in very high, and I fear dangerous, terms; yet when good men come to explain those terms, it evidently appears that many of whom they are used, are so in a state of salvation, as to be daily obnoxious to damnation,—so the children of God, as also to be children of the devil,—and so inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, as to be children of wrath and on the brink of hell."

Let us beware, then, of depending upon our bap-

tism, without being made spiritually "new creatures in Christ Jesus." To me and to many persons this appears to be a dangerous doctrine; and though it should be publicly pleaded for by men of great learning, and eminent station, and circulated through the country by high authority, yet I must deem it my duty as one, though one of the most unworthy, of the watchmen in Israel, to cry aloud and sound the alarm when the souls of men are endangered by a destructive error. It matters not by what names, ancient or modern, error is maintained and sanctioned, we must and do refer to "the law and to the testimony;" and if men speak not according to these, it is because "there is no truth in them."

Let us, my brethren, seriously inquire, each for himself, Am I born of God? and the answer does not seem to be difficult. We quoted several passages of Scripture, in which the Apostle tells us what are the characters of persons who are born of God; they are persons who have "received Christ," who "do not commit sin," and who have "overcome the world." By these marks we may know whether we are born of God or not.

And let us, if born of God, render it manifest in the whole of our character and conduct. Let us consider what dispositions of mind, and what kind of behaviour, may be expected from persons of such high birth. Let us "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom we are to shine as lights in the world." Let us be "followers, or imitators, of God, as dear children."

Finally. Let us recollect what future and eternal blessings appertain to us as children of God. If we are born of God, we are the children of God; and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ;" to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting praises! Amen.

# SERMON LXXXIX.

## ROMANS X. 13.

*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

THE Jews were for many ages the peculiar people of God. The introduction of the Gentiles into the church, was a mystery which had been hidden from the world; and therefore, when that great event took place, it was difficult to reconcile the Jewish Christians to it. The apostles themselves, who were Jews, were not forward to obey their Master's command—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel in every nation, and to every creature." God led them to it, as it were, by miracles; and the apostles found it necessary to quote passages from those prophets who had predicted this event; and to show the Jews how they were then fulfilling. Of this nature and design are the words of our text, which are quoted from the prophecy of Joel (ch. ii. 32); which Scripture was a prediction of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and is so applied by St. Peter, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The words of our text are, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." In the prophet Joel it is, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of JEHOVAH shall be saved." Doubtless, Jesus Christ is the person intended in the text, as all the verses connected with it clearly show; and if so, this passage of Scripture, like many others, proves that Jehovah, the name of the Divine Essence, is

applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ; and affords, among many others, an unanswerable proof of his divinity. For the illustration and profitable use of these words, I shall,

First, Make a few observations upon them; and,

Secondly, Show more particularly that Jesus Christ is properly an object of religious worship.

In the first place, we shall make a few observations on the words of the text—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

1. Salvation is the grand concern of an awakened sinner. It is the grand concern of him who "calls upon the name of the Lord," as the words "shall be saved" plainly show. This was the object the apostle had in view, as you find in the first verse of this chapter—"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved;" and in the ninth verse, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be *saved*." Salvation is deliverance,—deliverance from imminent danger, the danger of God's eternal wrath,—the "wrath to come;" and which will ever remain "the wrath to come." The person who calls upon the name of the Lord, is one who has been convinced that he has broken the holy law of God, and incurred its dreadful penalty, which is eternal death: he is afraid of God's judgments; and well he may, for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Hence he anxiously looks out for help: his inquiry is, "What shall I do to be saved?" Ask yourselves, my friends, Whether you have been brought into this state? and Whether you have thus called upon the name of the Lord, from a sense of danger? You know in what manner the Scriptures represent the condition of the sinner:—Sometimes it is that of a guilty and condemned criminal, in danger of punish-

ment; sometimes it is that of a sick man ready to die under the power of disease; sometimes it is that of a sheep, which has strayed from the fold, and is in danger of being devoured by wild beasts. Indeed, every expression of danger is employed in the illustration of the case of a sinner; and we should all be concerned to know that this is our condition, that so we may be induced to call upon the name of the Lord.

2. Calling upon the name of the Lord is an expression of faith in the heart.

No one calls on the name of the Lord, till he is persuaded that the Lord can help him in his particular case: and this is evident from the fourteenth verse of this chapter—"How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?"—believed in what? That which is called in the eighth verse, "the Word of Faith, which we preach;" the word of the Gospel, which a man "believeth with his heart unto righteousness;" for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,"—believing the testimony and promise of God in the Gospel is supposed in this case; and the apostle particularly refers to believing in the heart the resurrection of Christ. In the ninth verse it is said, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" because the resurrection of Christ is the great proof of his ability to save, and that he is accepted of the Father in the character of a Saviour; for, as the apostle elsewhere argues, "If Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain; ye are yet in your sins;"—and, in another place, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also in vain." But Jesus was both "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" so that we may join in the language of the apostle Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

3. Again. You will find this calling upon the Lord is accompanied with confession: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." There is a confession suitable to all Christians, in their joining some Christian society, in order to partake of divine ordinances; for though no particular form of doing this is specified in the Scriptures, yet almost all churches require some open profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, doubtless, our Lord himself requires it; for he has said (Matthew x.) "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

4. But the text has certainly a peculiar reference to prayer,—calling on the name of the Lord in prayer; and this necessarily supposes a belief that he is able to hear and to answer prayer; which he could not be, if he were a mere man, existing only in one place, and able to attend to one petition only at a time, and that where he is corporeally present; whereas Jesus says, for the comfort of his followers, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them." Calling upon the name of the Lord includes a personal application to Jesus for salvation; renouncing all dependence upon our own righteousness. It is the reverse of that for which the apostle so much blames his countrymen, in the third verse of this chapter: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Calling on the Lord implies a submission to the righteousness of the Lord; and

he who thus calls, must believe that "there is no name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus."

I proceed now, in the second place, more particularly to show that Jesus Christ is properly an object of religious worship.

Indeed, this is already sufficiently proved; for *reliance* upon Christ, and *calling* upon him as a Saviour, are the highest acts of worship we can perform; and it would be the height of folly to suppose, that if he were not God, he could save all the millions of sinners who, in all ages and countries, should call upon him; but that Christ is an object of religious worship, not only to men but to superior beings, appears from Heb. i. 6, where Jehovah says, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and so we find in the visions of St. John (Rev. v. 11—13)—"I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; proclaiming with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

It is evident, from several parts of the New Testament, that it was the character, the distinguishing character, of the first Christians, that they "called upon Christ." In the 11th and 12th verses of this chapter, it is said, "Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed; for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all them that call upon him;"—which supposes that all persons of this description, all who are real believers, do call upon him; for, in order to show there is no difference between Jew and Greek, he says "The same Lord over all is rich

unto all that call upon him." He is the Lord both of Jews and Gentiles; and he is rich unto all who call upon him. This supposes that all the saints do call upon him; and he is rich, inexhaustible in the riches of his merit and mercy, and exceedingly bounteous in his saving blessings to all sorts of persons, of whatever rank or nation,—to all and every one who invokes and worships him as a divine Saviour.

If we look into the history of the primitive Church, in the Acts of the Apostles, we find this was their character: they called upon the name of the Lord. For instance, in the 9th chapter of the Acts, and the 13th and 14th verses, Ananias says, concerning Saul of Tarsus, who was just come to Damascus, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that *call on thy name.*" It is evident that all real Christians, or saints, were persons who "called upon the name of the Lord." See likewise the twenty-first verse—"All that heard him," that is, converted Saul, "were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which *called on his name* in Jerusalem?"—and, in the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, first chapter and second verse, the apostle gives this description of Christians "unto the church of Christ which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints; with all that in every place *call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,* both theirs and ours." Nothing can be more clear than that this was the character of the first Christians,—that they called upon the name of the Lord Jesus, our common Lord, whom we, and all true Christians, join in acknowledging and adoring as their Lord and ours.

Once more, we find a similar expression in the

twenty-second of the Acts of the Apostles, and the sixteenth verse. There it is said to one, "Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, *calling on the name of the Lord.*" Here "calling on the name of the Lord" is united with baptism; which is certainly a solemn act of religious worship; and it is performed in the name of *Christ*, equally as in the name of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. The commission is—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism is an ordinance of consecration, or dedication to the service,—of whom? The Father, Son, and Spirit, as one God: and I know not whether this may be the meaning of what we read of, in a very early part of the sacred history; namely, in the days of Enos, the son of Seth—"Then men began to call on the name of the Lord." (Gen. iv.) Various views have been given of that Scripture; but "the name of the Lord" is very frequently a title given to Jesus Christ in the Old Testament; and calling upon the name of the Lord, may bear the same meaning there that it afterwards had; distinguishing between true believers in the Son of God, and those who rejected him.

Of a similar nature is the apostolic form of benediction generally used in Christian churches, at the conclusion of the public service—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you:" and it is remarkable, that in some of these benedictions the name of Jesus Christ stands first;—not to denote superiority; but certainly, in the position of the sentence, cannot denote inferiority;—and the order is changed in different places, perhaps to show that these Three are indeed One. The grand doctrine of the Trinity, including the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever may be the efforts of adversaries, will never be

banished from the Church, while these scriptural forms are retained in it.

And not only so, but we have instances of pious individuals calling upon the name of the Lord, and in the most peculiar and trying circumstances. For instance, the first Christian martyr, Stephen, Acts vii. 59. While they were stoning Stephen, he was calling upon God, or invoking, and saying "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Who but God can receive and preserve the departing spirit of a saint?—and it is observable, that these are the same words, or nearly the same words, which our blessed Lord addressed to his Father, in his last moments upon the cross; so that this petition of Stephen ascribes the same power and grace to the Son, that the Son of God himself ascribed to the Father.

The apostle Paul likewise speaks of himself, as paying this honour to the Son (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9), when he was earnestly desirous of the removal of that thorn in the flesh which he thought might hinder his usefulness:—"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Jesus Christ is, doubtless, that Lord upon whom he called, and from whom he received this answer.

I will mention one more instance, that of the apostle Thomas, after that fit of unbelief, as I may call it, when he declared he would never believe the resurrection of Christ without ocular demonstration of it; but when he was convinced, "Thomas said unto him, My Lord and my God." Some would evade the force of this argument, by saying it was only an exclamation occasioned by sudden surprize; but I apprehend the apostles were not accustomed to this profanity of language: they were not used to express themselves

vainly and lightly, in taking into their lips the sacred name of God. It was therefore not a profane exclamation, but a solemn invocation; and it was as much as to say, Thou art my Lord and my God; though I did doubt of it, I am now perfectly convinced.

I shall only add, that the apostle John recommends this worship of Christ, in his first epistle, chap. v. verses 13 and 14—"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God: and this is the confidence that we have in *Him*, That, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Now it is observable, that, in the same epistle (chap. iii. ver. 22) the same mode of expression is used with reference to God the Father:—"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him." Surely, then, this affords a proof that the Lord Jesus Christ is properly the object of divine worship.

That these were the views of the primitive Christians will be made to appear, from several instances recorded in ecclesiastical history; a few of which shall be mentioned.*

Ignatius of Antioch, who suffered for the faith, about the year 117, and who had conversed with some of the apostles, thus begins one of his epistles:—"I glorify Jesus Christ our God, who hath given unto you this wisdom."

Again. Polycarp of Smyrna, another martyr, who suffered in the year 167, said "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ himself, the eternal High Priest, the Son of God, build you up in

* See a Sermon by Bishop Horne, on Romans x. 13, vol. v. page 189.

faith, and truth, and in all meekness, to live without anger," &c.: and when he was brought to the stake, he concluded his last prayer with this doxology to the Trinity—"I bless thee, I praise thee, I glorify thee, for all things; together with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, with whom, unto thee, and the Holy Spirit, be glory, both now and for ever, world without end;" which doxology seems to have been common in Christian churches, from that time to this.

There was another eminent man, named Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century: he uses these words—"We worship and adore the God of Righteousness, and his Son, and the Holy Spirit of prophecy." Yet a little after, he tells the Emperor, "We hold it unlawful to worship any but God alone."

Again. In the Dioclesian persecution, Eusebius, the historian, says "that the inhabitants of a city in Phrygia, men, women, and children, while assembled in the church, were surprised by their enemies, and burnt, calling upon Christ, God over all."

To which I shall only add, it is well known that Pliny, the historian, writing to the Emperor concerning the Christians, mentions it as a common custom among them to meet on a certain day, before it was light, and sing a hymn to Christ as God. The testimonies fully prove, that Jesus Christ was considered by the first Christians as a proper object of religious adoration; or according to the words of our text, that "they called upon the name of the Lord."

### IMPROVEMENT.

Is calling upon the name of the Lord the practice of real Christians?—have we then done it? Do we know any thing of thus calling upon the name of the

Lord? Some, perhaps, call upon the name of the Lord in a light, trifling, and profane way. This, alas! is to call down condemnation on their own souls; and it is very shocking to hear men and women too, in the street, exclaiming "O Christ!" But it is a blessed prayer, "O Christ, hear us and help us!" Or, as it is expressed in the Litany of the Established Church, "Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us! O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! O Christ, hear us! Christ, have mercy upon us!"—and what an encouragement does this text afford us when calling upon him! It is a positive promise, like that well-known Scripture, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

With what confidence may we call upon the name of the Lord, seeing that he is the Almighty God! We may derive much encouragement from the success of those who, when our Lord was upon earth, called upon him for various purposes. Let me remind you of a few instances. You recollect the poor, miserable leper (Matt. viii. 2) who fell down before him, and said "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The gracious answer of our Lord was, "I will; be thou clean." When the centurion applied to Jesus in behalf of his servant, who was sick of the palsy and grievously tormented, he immediately said "I will come and heal him." When a certain ruler worshipped him, and said "My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live;"—Jesus heard, and it was done. Again: a poor woman, who had been long diseased, touches the hem of his garment; her heart called upon him, though her lips were silent: the cure was granted, and "she was made whole from that hour." Two blind men cried aloud, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" and their eyes were opened. The

friends of a dumb man cried to him for help, and the dumb spake. Peter, sinking in the sea, cried "Lord, save me! I perish!" The compassionate Saviour caught him, and saved him. When the Canaanitish woman cried "Have mercy upon me, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil;" —Jesus heard, and replied, "O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—Time would fail us to recount all the instances of success which attended those who cried to the Lord for temporal benefits; and can we suppose the compassionate heart of Jesus will feel less for us, when we call upon him for the salvation of our immortal souls? One instance more must be mentioned. When he was hanging upon the cross, between two malefactors, and when there seemed to be the least encouragement to call upon him as a Saviour, one of the sufferers, whose heart God had touched with compunction, called upon him, and said "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" he called not upon him in vain;—Christ immediately and graciously answered, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." O then with what confidence may we call upon him, and rely upon him! and unite with the apostle in saying, "I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day!" Each of us has an immortal soul,—what have we done with it? To whom was it offered? How was it employed? In the service of Christ or of Satan? Have we committed it to Christ for salvation? He will receive it; he will keep it; he will be faithful to his trust. Well, then, let each of us resolve, "I will call upon him as long as I live."

Now unto Him, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, the one God of our salvation, be glory in all the churches, now and for evermore! Amen.

# SERMON XC.

JOHN v. 25.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*

WHAT is true religion? This is a question, in the decision of which every person is deeply interested. True religion is more than a form of sound words; more than a scriptural mode of worship and discipline; more than a course of decent and respectable morals. What more? According to our text, it is *A Life*,—a *new Spiritual Life*,—the life of God in the soul of man; a spark, as it were, of the divine nature;—a birth derived from the Spirit of God.

Thus speaks my text. The words before us are full of majesty; they are the words of the Son of God, who "spake as never man spake;" and they were spoken in vindication of his character and mission against the cavils of the Jews. He had performed a great miracle at the pool of Bethesda; he had healed, in a moment, a poor man who had been a cripple almost forty years; but the Jews, instead of being thereby convinced that he was the true Messiah, opposed and persecuted him: but he asserts his power to perform the same divine actions as his Father; and he claims the same divine honours. Now, one of the most glorious

displays of the divine power is the resurrection of the dead; and "as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." This power, he declares in our text, shall accompany his word; and he introduces the declaration with his usual solemnity,—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." There is a two-fold resurrection spoken of in this chapter, of both which Christ is the author. The first is a spiritual resurrection, or the renewal of the souls of men who are dead in sins; and the other is a corporeal resurrection, or raising up the dead bodies of men from the grave. The first is spoken of in the text; the other is asserted in the 28th and 29th verses of this chapter—"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Of the spiritual resurrection intended in the text, he says, not only the hour cometh, but it now is; and, doubtless, divine power attended the discourse of which our text is a part; and God grant that the same power may now attend his word, that some here present may, at *this* hour, hear the voice of the Son of God, and live!

Here let us notice the four following particulars:—

First. The condition of all natural men: they are "dead."

Secondly. The description of the Gospel: it is "the voice of the Son of God."

Thirdly. The application of this with divine power: "the dead shall *hear* the voice of the Son of God:" and,

Lastly. The happy effect of all this: "and they that hear shall live."

First. Let us notice the condition of all natural men as here described: "The *dead* shall hear." Nothing, my friends, is of greater importance in practical religion than to be well acquainted with our true state and condition, as fallen creatures, as the children of Adam, in whom we all fell from the original state in which man was created. Upon this, therefore, the Scripture frequently insists; and to render us the better acquainted with it, it is illustrated by many similitudes. Here it is represented as *a state of death;* not that of the body, though that will assuredly follow, as the wages of sin; but that state of the soul, even in a living person, which unhappily resembles death. Thus St. Paul, when he congratulates the Ephesian Christians on their conversion, refers to their former condition before conversion. (Ephes. ii. 1.) He says, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" and the same apostle, speaking of a person living in sin (1 Tim. v. 6) expressly says, "She that liveth in pleasure" (luxuriously and carnally devoted to sensual passions) "is dead while she liveth."

The propriety of this similitude will appear, if you recollect the following particulars:—The dead are in a state of perfect ignorance; whatever is passing in the world, even among those who were their nearest and dearest relations and friends, they know it not. Whatever improvements are making in science, whatever revolutions take place upon earth, they know them not;—and is not the state of every natural man a state of ignorance? Yes; "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them," while remaining in that state; for "they must be spiritually discerned." The dead are totally inactive. As the tree falls, so it lies; and thus it is with dead souls: the eye is closed to all the glorious objects of the Gospel; the ear is shut against all the charming sounds of

grace; not a breath of prayer ascends to God;—not a step is moved towards the heavenly world.

Death is a state of deformity. The once beautiful countenance is bereft of all its charms, and becomes shocking and ghastly. Abraham says of his beloved Sarah, "Bury my dead out of my sight." And has not sin despoiled man of his original beauty?—for once he was beautiful indeed; bearing the glorious resemblance of his great and holy Maker;—but now the holy God turns away with disgust from the sinner, for "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

Putrefaction soon follows after death; for "all flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field:"—more odious to the infinitely holy God is iniquity, obscenity, profaneness, and every other vice, than the putrifying carcass to living mortals; for "the throat of the wicked,"—his abominable language,—is more noisome to God than "an open sepulchre."

There is yet another respect in which man may be said to be dead: he is in a state of condemnation, like a man under sentence of death, and who is therefore said to be "dead in law," though the sentence be not yet executed. Every man is a sinner; and because he is a sinner, he stands condemned by the holy law of God; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and unless such a person be relieved from that state by the Gospel, "the wrath of God abideth on him." Believers are indeed justified; they have "passed from death unto life:" but before a man believes in Christ, and so takes the benefit of the heavenly act of grace, he continues "in his sin," and "the wrath of God abides upon him:" and not only so, but living under the Gospel, his unbelief creates an additional and worse offence, and exposes him to

additional penalties; for "he that believeth not is condemned already"—and condemned chiefly, because he believeth not in the name of the "only-begotten Son of God." But let us proceed,

In the second place, To consider that description of the Gospel which is given us in the text: "The dead shall hear." Hear what? "The voice of the Son of God;" and that voice is no other than the word of Christ, in and by the Gospel.

It is generally understood that, at the great day, the Son of God will descend from heaven in great glory; and then, according to the twenty-eighth verse of this chapter, "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth." We conceive, as we ought, very highly of that majestic voice, accompanied as it will be by the exertion of power truly Almighty; when all the countless millions of the dead, long before mingled with the dust, shall re-assume the human form, and, re-animated with the human spirit, shall ascend to stand at the tribunal of Christ. To this is compared, in our text, the voice of the Son of God in the Gospel. How great and glorious then is that Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation!" "for, observe, it is the same voice which shall hereafter raise the dead bodies of men from the grave, which now raises the dead soul from its state of nature and sin.

Our blessed Lord once resided on our earth; he travelled about Judea and Galilee, preaching the kingdom of God from city to city, from town to town, from village to village; in the temple, in the synagogue, on the mountains, in ships,—wherever he had an opportunity,—wherever an audience could be collected; but he has long since left our world, and transferred this work to other and meaner hands. The apostles were his first messengers; and when their labours were finished, the great work devolved on the

ordinary pastors and teachers of the churches. Preaching the Gospel is a divine ordinance, to be continued to the end of time; and those whom he has qualified for it, and called to it, he will bless in the discharge of their duty, according to his gracious promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Let every divine truth then, though declared by the lips of fallible men,—men of like passions with yourselves,—be received, not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God (1 Thess. ii. 13); and let the apostolic admonition be duly regarded, "See that ye refuse not him who speaketh from heaven;" for the Gospel, though it may be uttered by fallible lips, is a record or testimony from heaven, witnessed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (1 John v. 10); and it is at our peril that we neglect it.

Consider also the inestimable value of this word. It clearly *informs* us concerning the great things which belong to our peace; and "the entrance of this word" into the mind "giveth light: it giveth understanding to the simple." This word likewise faithfully *warns* us; it kindly sets before us the dreadful danger that awaits the impenitent sinner; according to that which was stated to be the proper business of the prophet of old, when God said to him (Ezek. iii. 17, 18), "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman over the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." The apostle Paul felt the force of this admonition; and he told the Ephesian elders, when he was taking leave of them (Acts xx. 26), that he was "pure from the blood of all men; for he had

not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God;"—that "he had not ceased, by the space of three years, to warn and beseech every one of them, night and day, with tears." Undoubtedly, the same is still the duty of every minister of the Gospel.

In this word also he affectionately *invites* us. He bids us "seek him while he may be found;" he assures us, that if "the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, the Lord will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon." All things needful for the salvation of man being prepared and proposed, he invites all, even those who are to be found in "the highways and hedges," to come and partake of the Gospel-feast, "all things being ready;" yea, he says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

In this word also he graciously and faithfully *promises* a ready welcome; yea, he says (and what more could we have wished him to say) "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." We are,

In the third place, To consider the application of this word to the heart with divine power: "The dead shall *hear* the voice of the Son of God." The dead *hear!* This is an extraordinary thing indeed! The dead hear! How can this be? No human sounds,—not the shrill blast of the trumpet, nor the horrible roar of the cannon, nor the tremendous peal of thunder,—can affect the ear of the dead; yet "the *dead shall hear* the voice of the Son of God;" for that which is impossible to men, is easy to God.

On one memorable occasion, our blessed Lord visited the grave of his friend Lazarus; and when amidst a numerous company, surrounding the tomb, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!"—behold with astonishment, "he that was dead, came forth." This is amazing! Lazarus hears the voice of the Son of God, and lives; he comes forth, and entertains the

Saviour in his house. It is, doubtless, in allusion to such an effect of divine power as this on a dead body, that our Lord speaks of the resurrection of a dead soul; and does it not plainly intimate, that nothing less than such a power is sufficient for this purpose? If we know the Scriptures, if we know ourselves, we shall readily admit that men are so profoundly and wilfully ignorant, and oftentimes so hardened in their feelings—so wedded to the world—so full of enmity against God and religion,—that nothing less than almighty power can effect the change described: "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God."

In this case, the person feels, for the first time, a disposition to hear and regard the word of life, however strong his prejudices might have been before. It is said of Lydia, who was converted to God at Philippi, that "the Lord opened her heart, so that she *attended* to the things which were spoken of Paul." Had not the Lord *opened her heart*, she would not have attended to them; for it is marvellous that the word of God is not *heard*, even where it is *spoken;* and were you to go from pew to pew in our places of worship, you would find very few who heard it with *attention*, and fewer still with *understanding*. The birds of the air take up the seed as soon as it is sown, —it has no abiding in the heart of man. I once told you of a person I conversed with when dying: she had been brought up under the word all her life; but she assured me that she never heard but *one sermon*, which was the last. She had never regarded the word at all; and thus many persons attend to hear sermons, who never do hear! O what sin is committed in all our places of worship while the sermon is preached!

Others are attentive, in some degree; yet they do not *understand* what they hear: but when the Lord speaks to the heart, he causes his voice to be distinguished, and his people know the meaning of it; as

the apostle speaks of the Thessalonians, that "they received the word, not as the word of man, but as it is, in truth, the word of God." And here is the difference between carnal and spiritual hearers:—The carnal hearers go to hear the *man;* the spiritual hearers go to hear *Christ*, through the man. Their language is, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

When the word is heard to purpose, it is heard with *faith*. The word never profits, unless it be "mixed with faith." (Heb. ii.) It is received as the testimony of God, divinely and infallibly true; and he who hears it as the voice of the Son of God, affixes his seal to it, and thereby declares his belief that God is true.

And if the word be thus mixed with faith, it will also be "received with *love*," with cordial esteem and affection. "As new-born babes," the children of God imbibe "the milk of the word;" and each of them can truly say, "How sweet are the words to my taste! they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb!" "O how love I thy law!"

Once more. He who hears the voice of the Son of God in his word, will hear it *obediently*. When Saul of Tarsus first heard this voice, and knew whose voice it was, he very properly said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Such will be the language of every true believer: there will be a cordial approbation of the divine commandments, as "holy, just, and good;" and he will say, with sincerity, "Lord, have mercy upon me, and write all these thy laws upon my heart, I beseech thee!"

I proceed now to the last particular before us, and that is, The happy effect of all this: "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and *they that hear shall live*." As Lazarus lived, from the moment that Christ uttered his voice, and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" so sinners, having heard the quickening voice of Christ in the Gospel, commence a new and spiritual

life, which shall never cease, but shall issue in eternal life. We said, at the beginning of this discourse, that Religion is a Life; there is a new principle implanted in the souls of men; a principle of motion, of perception, of enjoyment; something that is active and permanent in its nature; according to another figure of speech, used for the same purpose by our Lord, in his discourse with the woman of Samaria:—"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Here is the abiding active principle; that which we call Life, and in which there is a gradual progression,—"the babe, the young man, and the father in Christ."

The word of Christ is the instrument of regeneration. "Of his own will," says St. James, "he begat us with the word of truth;" and hence we are said to be "born of God."

All such persons are said to live, according to the 24th verse: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." We read also, in the fifth chapter to the Romans, of "Justification unto life." The believer is brought into a new state; and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes him free from the law of sin and death."

It is also a life of *comfort* to which we are called; for being "justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is satisfaction and pleasure in the word, and ways, and people, of God. Believers delight in his service, and find a day in his courts better than a thousand: they had rather be door-keepers in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Further. It is a life of *holiness*. Those who live, "live to the Lord." They are "alive to God, through Jesus Christ;" they are "redeemed to God;" they are no longer the servants of sin; they no longer live to themselves, but to the Lord,—his will being their rule, his honour the great end of all their actions; and then,

A life of *glory* shall crown the whole. This is God's great object; and, therefore, the believer is said already to "have everlasting life." The title to it he possesses in Christ Jesus; and the first fruits of it are received in the graces and influences of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we have endeavoured to show the condition of all natural men,—they are dead; the description of the Gospel,—it is the voice of the Son of God; the application of this with power,—the dead shall hear; and the happy effects of the whole,—they that hear shall live.

## CONCLUSION.

How wonderful is the condescension of Christ! He speaks, he speaks even to dead sinners! To us, even to us, "is the word of this salvation sent!" and O what importance does this give to the preaching of the Gospel, to the reading of the Scriptures, and to all divine ordinances! It is the voice of the Son of God. We should remember, whenever we attend them, that we are all present before God; we come to hear the voice of the Son of God. And O let us take care that we hearken to this voice! Does he speak, and shall we not hear? Shall we turn a deaf ear to the calls and entreaties of the Saviour? "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." Doubtless, it is the character of

all true Christians, that they hear the voice of the Son of God. Beware then of neglecting or refusing to hear him; for it is written, "If any man will not hear this Prophet, he shall be cut off from among the people;" and if any finally refuse to hearken to him, how awful will be his condition another day! Then will he say, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; therefore, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." But if, through grace, we have been enabled, as some of us doubtless have been, to hear his gracious voice, let us, with joy, receive and rely upon the assurance he gives us in the text, that we shall live: "He that heareth shall live!" May this be our happiness, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

# SERMON XCI.

EPHESIANS IV. 20, 21.

*But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, &c.*

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ provides the only efficacious remedy for all the diseases of the moral world—the only effectual relief to fallen, guilty, dying men. We have, at all times, occasion to blush for the vices of mankind, and especially for those of our native country; but, bad as things are, they would be infinitely worse if the influences of the Gospel were withdrawn; if the doctrines of Christ were not preached; if Christian examples were not exhibited. Multitudes among us, who are not real and spiritual Christians, happily differ much from men in a heathen state; from such men as are described by St. Paul in the verses preceding our text. Exhorting believers to a holy conduct, he says (verse 17)—"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind," &c. Such is the faithful but melancholy picture which, from having resided two years at Ephesus, he was enabled, from his personal knowledge, to draw; but the Gospel of Christ, preached by himself and others, had produced in many persons a happy change. Many who were once in total darkness, had been savingly enlightened; many who had been dead

in trespasses and sins, had been spiritually quickened; many who were once "far from God," had been "brought nigh by the blood of Christ;"—and now he affectionately exhorts them, in this chapter, to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they had been called" (ver. 1): they must differ from their still Pagan neighbours, who wallowed in vice; for, says he in our text, "Ye have not so learned Christ," or rather, "not so ye,—for ye have learned Christ;" having learned of Christ, ye must learn to live *like Christ*. He who taught you is *himself* holy, and requires you also to be holy.

This sentiment is applicable to all the professed disciples of Christ; to us, my brethren, as well as to the Ephesians. The text, then, presents to us the following most valuable lesson:—

Those who are taught by Christ, are under the strongest obligations to walk according to his instructions.

To illustrate and enforce this sentiment, let us, 1. Consider what is meant by being taught by Christ; and, 2. The obligations under which they are laid, who are so instructed.

1. What is meant by being taught of Christ? Our text speaks of *learning Christ*,—of having *heard him*,—and of having been *taught by him*, as the truth is in Jesus. These expressions may include *learning of him*, as our teacher; and *learning him*, as the great *subject* of his teaching; for he is both the Master and the Subject.

Christ is the great Teacher of the world. Ineffectual were all the efforts of heathen sages to enlighten the world. The great philosophers had done little or nothing to better the condition of mankind at large. St. Paul, who well knew what their attempts had been, declares that, after all, "the world by wisdom knew not God;"—it was reserved for his own Son to

enlighten mankind. Some of the wisest of the heathen sages were honest enough to confess their ignorance, and to declare their expectations of the great Teacher. That Teacher at length appeared. For several years he went about Judea, diffusing heavenly wisdom wherever he went, with a simplicity and dignity that astonished his hearers, and constrained them to say, "Never man spake like this man." Having finished his work upon earth, he confided the business of instruction to other hands, qualifying them for it by his Holy Spirit, and promising to succeed their efforts by his own presence and blessing.

The apostle says, that the Ephesians had "heard him, and been taught by him." Not *personally* indeed; for Christ never visited *Ephesus*; but *ministerially*. The apostles and other teachers had "the mind of Christ;" his Spirit had led them into all truth; and both by their preaching and their writings they published it to the world.

We also are still favoured with the word of Christ. Many of our Lord's admirable discourses were committed to writing by the Four Evangelists. The apostles also wrote many epistles to churches or individuals; which epistles are of no less authority than the Gospels; and taken together with the Old Testament (which is "also the word of Christ") we may still be said to have heard and learned of him. His truth, ministerially declared to us, in and by his ordinance of public preaching, or perused by us in private, is to be received, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God; which is able to make us wise to salvation, through faith in him." Hence we are exhorted (Heb. xii. 25) to beware "that we refuse not him that speaketh from heaven;" and we are no less bound to regard the written word, than if we heard the voice of Christ himself. This Gospel delivered to us, is "the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death," and the original sanction

still attends it. "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be condemned."

But Christ is not only the great Teacher, but he is *himself* the chief subject of all divine teaching. Our text speaks of the truth "as it is *in Jesus*;"—he is, as it were, the centre in which all the lines of divine truth meet;—he is the great subject of the Gospel; so that "preaching Christ" and "preaching the Gospel" are the same thing. According to what St. Paul intimates as to his own practice, he was "determined not to know any thing among the people but Jesus Christ and him crucified." And the words may also refer to the purity of the doctrine taught. To know the truth "as it is in Jesus," is to know and receive the pure unadulterated truth, as it was at first delivered by him and his apostles; and without that mixture of error, which the weakness or wickedness of men has since introduced. Or it may further intimate, that to know the truth aright, is to know it *practically;* as not only taught by the *lips* of Jesus, but as also beautifully exemplified in his holy *life;* in his harmless, devout, and benevolent practice; for Christ taught by his example, as well as by his doctrine.

But I think we are to understand by the words chiefly this:—That Jesus Christ, and salvation by him, is the sum and substance of what we are to learn. "I am," said Christ, "the truth"—the substance of the numerous ordinances of the Old Testament—of their priesthood, their altar, their sacrifices, their washings;—they were "the shadows of good things to come;" and they did come, in and with Christ, who is the body, the substance, the soul of them all.

Thus, when St. Paul reproves the Galatians for entertaining some dangerous errors about justification, he aggravates their fault, by saying, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

It is plain that what he distinguished by the name of "the Truth," was the gospel-method of salvation by Jesus Christ—the acceptance and justification of a sinner, through faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ. In short, that great doctrine which is represented in so solemn a manner by St. John, in his first epistle, fifth chapter, and called a *testimony* or *record*, testified by the Three in heaven and Three on earth, which is this, that "GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE; AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON."

We by no means exclude from the truth the DUTIES which devolve upon believers; for we shall presently show that these are not only necessarily connected, but form an essential part of it.

Indeed, to know the truth of the Gospel aright, is to be taught by the Holy Spirit, not merely words and propositions of truth; or to yield the assent of the understanding to them—it is far more; the *heart* as well as the head is influenced. Divine things truly learned, have a powerful influence on the affections of the soul, on the temper and dispositions of the heart, and upon the whole conduct; allowing for those deviations and imperfections which, alas! are found in the best of men.

This is strongly implied in the text, and forms the second branch of our discourse; for the apostle is, you will recollect, exhorting the Ephesians to walk differently from the unconverted heathen, and to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and, in a word, to become new creatures.

And here we may observe, that the text, with many other similar passages in Scripture, plainly intimate that some who professed to receive the Gospel, disregarded its practical influence.

The Gospel must be allowed to be "a good message"—"glad tidings of great joy," and well calculated to excite the attention, the affectionate attention, of

men in general;—and would do so universally, were it not for the strong and unhappy prejudices of the carnal mind. Hence we find, that although it be "the wisdom of God and the power of God," it is rejected by some, as foolish and irrational; and by others, as even immoral in its tendency. This is intimated by St. Paul (Rom. vi. 1)—"What shall we say then? Shall we sin, that grace may abound?"—and more distinctly (Rom. iii. 8)—"And not (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil that good may come;" to which he adds, "whose damnation is just;" that is, the condemnation of those who teach and practise such things, is both certain and just, and St. Jude (verse 4 of his epistle) speaks of "false teachers, ungodly men, who turned the grace of God (that is the Gospel of his grace) into lasciviousness;" perverting the holy Gospel into an encouragement to vice.

But this was never the doctrine nor the practice of the apostles and first Christians. Yet we are not to be surprised if there were some unhappy instances of Antinomian perverseness. The Gospel, especially when it becomes the religion of a nation, embraces persons of every description, according to the parable of the net (Matt. xiii. 47)—"The kingdom of heaven (the dispensation of the Gospel) is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, good and bad:" and, agreeably to another parable, in which the tares and the wheat are represented as growing together in the same field. St. James also speaks largely of "a dead faith;" a faith "without works;" a faith which does not work, as true faith always does, "by love." But let not St. James be mistaken. He does not assert that true faith may exist without works; for as faith refers to the testimony of God as believed, he that rejects the necessity of holiness, rejects an essential part of that testimony;

for the Gospel insists both on "the water and the blood" which issued from the side of the crucified Saviour; denoting the double virtue of his death—to purify the heart, as well as to purge the conscience.

There may be a high degree of scriptural knowledge without real grace. St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii.) supposes the possibility of having "all knowledge," and yet being destitute of the essential grace of love, which always accompanies genuine faith. The apostle John is very explicit; he says (1 Eph. i. 6) "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and *walk in darkness;*" that is, "practise wickedness," we lie, and do not the truth;—we do not act agreeably to the true and holy doctrine of the Gospel.

Again. The directions given by the apostles to the churches, as to their conduct towards bad men, ordering them to be excluded from their communion, render it plain that holiness is the law of God's house. And awful beyond description or conception will be the proceeding in the judgment of the great day of Christ, when all men shall appear before his tribunal; and when all shall be judged according to (the evidence of) their works. The largest account we hear of that decisive day, is from the lips of the Great Judge himself, recorded in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew; which account, you will observe, relates only to the trial of the professors of the Gospel; and the sentences then to be pronounced will proceed upon the evidence adduced,—the evidence of the fruits of faith, or of the want of them.

Whatever be the conduct of professed Christians, the Gospel gives no countenance whatever to unholy tempers or ungodly practices. On the contrary, it always and everywhere insists upon holiness; upon dying to sin, and living to righteousness; and positively declares, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

Our Lord, in his charming intercessory prayer,

(John xvii.) prays thus for his disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth:" and it appears from the commission he gave to the apostle of the Gentiles, that he was sent "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, that they might ultimately obtain an inheritance among all them that *are sanctified through faith in Christ.*" And this effect was actually produced: and the evidence that the Gentiles were really converted was, that God had "purified their hearts by faith."

Let us now state some of the obligations under which believers are laid, to walk agreeably to the holy Gospel.

1. The unchangeable authority of God. While God is God, and men are his creatures, they must be bound to obey his known will. Their obligation to obedience is not discharged or weakened by their being brought into a new state by grace. They have additional helps, not known to the law; but no discharge from its obligations. They do not, indeed, obey with a view to merit life and the favour of God; nor will their partial failures issue in death; but the authority of God over them is not vacated nor diminished. The holy and unchangeable law of God, as to the *substance* of it, is *love;* love to him and love to our fellow-men; and this, according to the stipulations of the covenant of grace, is written by the Spirit on the heart. Some express themselves too loosely on the subject: they say believers will love God; and love will compel them to obedience. It will so; and so far they say well; but why set aside the authority of God to command, and the duty of believers to obey?

2. We argue the necessity of a holy walk, from the whole of the Saviour's gracious designs and undertakings in behalf of his church.

The first intimation of his designs was, that "he should bruise the serpent's head;" that is, destroy his power, counteract his temptations, and restore man

from the guilt and misery of the fall. But can this be done without restoring him to the exercise of love and obedience?

Consider the offices of Christ. He is a PROPHET; he teaches the whole will of God; and an important branch of that will is our santification. He deputed his apostles to "teach men to observe all things, whatsoever he commanded them." We know in what a spiritual manner he expounded the law and pointed out its purity. His disciples ought to make that their constant rule, and be satisfied with nothing less than complete conformity to it: and in this they are assisted by the Gospel; therein, "as in a glass, they behold the glory of the Lord, and are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." And this is the argument in the text:—Ye have learned Christ, ye have been taught by him. Christ is a holy teacher, and he makes holy disciples; if we are not such, we are not his true disciples.

He is also a PRIEST. The work of a priest was to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people, and also to intercede for them. What one branch of Christ's intercession for his people is, we have already seen; it is that they may be kept from evil; that they may be holy. To take away guilt was not the only, though it was the first, design of the sacrifice of Christ: he had a further object: he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; that he might purify "to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 14.) He died for us who were dead, that we, who live through him, might not live to ourselves, or to sin, but unto him who died for us, and rose again. (2 Cor. v. 14.)

Jesus Christ is likewise a KING; as such he reigns in us and over us. He opposes and restrains both our outward enemies, and our inward lusts. He will not suffer sin to have dominion over us. Other lords have

had dominion; but now he assumes the throne of the heart, and will not endure a rival. The words which follow our text show what was the design of the writer. If we truly learn of Christ, then, saith he, "put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness;" or, "the holiness of truth:" and the apostle proceeds to point out particulars;—he speaks against lying, excessive anger, dishonesty, improper conversation, bitterness, clamour, and slander; and exhorts to industry, love, and generosity:—in short, saith he, "Be imitators of God, as his dear children."

3. A third obligation arises from gratitude. The love of Christ constraineth us; and love is the fulfilling of the law. Of old, God enforced his commandments on Israel, from the consideration of the great things he had done for them. Exod. xx. 2—"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;" and we, as Christians, are hereby taught that, "because God is the Lord, and our God and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments;" because "he hath delivered us out of the hand of our enemies," we are by gratitude constrained "to serve him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life."

4. Another argument for holy living is derived from our own personal comfort, which is best promoted thereby. One grand evidence of personal interest in Christ, arises from the fruits of faith. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" and who are they? They are such as walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit." (Rom. viii. 1.) And St John says, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments;" and again, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked." (1 John ii. 3—6.) Con-

science, it is true, derives its peace first from the blood of Christ; but a holy life affords an additional evidence, by which the reality of our faith is made evident both to ourselves and others.

5. The glory of God, and the good of men, require that we should walk worthy of our vocation. The end that God has in view in all his works, is his own glory; it is fit that should also be our end. Christ has assured us that his Father is glorified by our bringing forth much fruit; let this, then, be our constant aim. Our Lord's direction is, "Let your light so shine before men, that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven." There is a language in a holy and useful life that cannot be misunderstood; that speaks to the heart; and silences opposition, disarms prejudice, and adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour. This St. Peter recommends to the first Christians, against whom all manner of evil was falsely spoken; "Having," says he, "your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak evil of you, as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

## IMPROVEMENT.

Two great lessons may be learned from this discourse:—To KNOW CHRIST,—and To LIVE TO CHRIST. To be taught by him; and then to prove we *are* so taught, by our holy obedience to his will.

1. Let every one of us be concerned to know him; "it is for our life." Remember the words of our Saviour (John xvii. 3)—"This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Life is short, and this is the principal business of it. Lose then no opportunity. Improve especially the Lord's day. Be a diligent hearer of the word: and hear it more than once every Sabbath, if possible. Let the hours before sermons, between ser-

mons, and after sermons, be well employed; and some part of them in secret. Avoid Sunday visitings; they are the bane of religious profession, and tend to undo in the house all that has been done in the Church, unless, which is too seldom the case, the time is devoted to religious exercises; but nothing must exclude *closet religion*. On week-days too, find some time for hearing the word. Most people find some leisure for visits and amusements; and can none be found for lectures and meetings for social prayer? Daily read the Scriptures; in so doing, Christ, by his Spirit, will be your teacher, and you will grow in grace, and in the knowledge of him.

O what a shame and a sin will it be for any persons to abide in darkness, who dwell in this land of light! How much better would it have been for such to have been born in heathen countries than in this, if the means of grace be wholly neglected!

Is this knowledge, in some happy degree, already attained? Prize it above all acquisitions, and be thankful to your heavenly Teacher. With holy Paul, "account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

Finally. Let believers evince the excellency of their knowledge by its holy and excellent effects. The reality and solidity of our professed knowledge must be manifested by its practical effects. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them." "Ye are my friends," said Christ to his disciples, "if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." Thus let us "hold forth the word of life," by a conversation "void of offence towards God and all men;" this will convince the world that "we have been with Jesus;" and that we have so learned of him, as to have become "wise unto salvation."

END OF VOL. VII.

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# VILLAGE SERMONS;

OR, SHORT AND PLAIN

# DISCOURSES,

FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES.

BY GEORGE BURDER

VOL. VIII.

CONTAINING TEN SERMONS,

WITH ONE HUNDRED SHORT PRAYERS OR COLLECTS, &c.

A NEW EDITION.

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# ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author now concludes the Work proposed; and embraces this public opportunity of making his thankful acknowledgment to the God of all Grace, who has thus far prolonged his days, and enabled him, amidst numerous and important engagements, to accomplish his design. At the footstool of the Divine Majesty he begs leave to place this humble Volume; praying that, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, it may become useful to the souls of men. He desires to offer up to God his sincere Thanksgiving for the blessing he has vouchsafed to give to the former Volumes. He would also express his Gratitude to the Religious Public, for the candour with which they have accepted such plain Discourses; and to his Brethren in the Ministry, of various denominations, who have been pleased to recommend them to their people.—May the Divine blessing accompany this and every other effort to promote the glory of Christ, and the salvation of mankind!

G. B.

*Nov.* 18, 1819.

[These Village Sermons having been often reprinted, both in duodecimo and octavo, and sometimes when the author has not had the opportunity of revising them; through this circumstance, not only have literal errors crept into the work, which have been since corrected, but a mistake has occurred in numbering the discourses, which, in fact, amount to one hundred and *one*, besides the Prayers, though only numbered as one hundred; the last sermon of the seventh, and the first of the eighth volume being both numbered XCI. the latter of which is now distinguished by an asterisk—XCI.*

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# SERMON XCI.

LUKE I. 45.

*And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.*

THESE words were spoken, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, to Mary the mother of our blessed Lord. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, and entered her house, the latter no sooner heard the voice of the former, than the babe leaped in her womb; and she broke forth into that congratulation of which the text is a part, pronouncing her to be truly happy, who had given credit to the promise which God had made to her concerning the infant Jesus, who should be born of her; and assuring her that whatever the Lord had spoken to her should certainly be accomplished.

But, though these words were spoken in a way of congratulation to a certain individual, and upon an occasion altogether singular, yet they may with equal truth be addressed to every believer of each sex.—Blessed art thou, believer, for there shall be a performance to thee, of all the precious promises

which God hath made in his holy word. The observation we may derive from these words is this:—

*They are truly happy persons who rely upon the promises of God in his Gospel, for they may confidently expect their fulfilment.*

When we take a view of the nature and tendency of the Gospel, it is evident that real Christians are entitled to happiness. The word *Gospel* denotes as much! for it signifies *good news*, or a good *message*. In the Old Testament the promised coming of the Saviour is always represented as an occasion of the greatest gladness. The prophet Isaiah says, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" (Isa. xl. 9, &c.) These glad tidings should be universally proclaimed. And when, in the fulness of time, God became incarnate; when the eternal Word was made flesh, and came to dwell with men, a multitude of the heavenly host burst forth into that joyful chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." Luke ii. 14. And when the pious Simeon, who was one of those that waited for the Consolation of Israel, had embraced the infant Saviour in his arms, he wished to live no longer; he was completely happy, and cried "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Observe also the immediate effect of receiving the Gospel by the first Christians: those who "gladly received the word" professed it, and associated together; and they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart;"—the joy of their souls in the great salvation, gave an additional relish to the comforts of life. When Philip the Evan-

gelist, went down to Samaria, and preached Christ to the people, "there was great joy in the city;" and when the jailer of Philippi suddenly received the good news of the Gospel from the mouth of his prisoners, Paul and Silas, "he rejoiced with all his house:" and this joy took place immediately, on the simple belief of the truth, and before there was time to exhibit the fruits and evidences of faith, which no doubt were afterwards exhibited, and which are produced in every sincere believer. Such is the nature, and such the effect, of the Gospel, cordially received; for the kingdom of Christ consisteth not in ceremonial observances; but "in righteousness, in peace, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost."

It is nevertheless a certain truth, that many pious persons, of whose sincerity there can be no doubt, do not enjoy this happiness, at least not in any great degree, nor with constancy. They are oftentimes dejected, and troubled with much anxiety, and many distressing doubts and fears. Now, as the Gospel is calculated to promote joy and peace, there must be something wrong in a sincere disciple of Christ if these be not possessed,—if distressing fears generally prevail. It is therefore of great importance to find out the causes of this evil, and, if possible, prescribe a certain remedy.

Upon inquiry, I think it will be found that the principal causes are (1.) Imperfect views of the Gospel of Christ, and a mistaken apprehension that its blessings are *conditionally* bestowed, so that something good in the sinner must first be produced, which may authorize him to hope in Christ; or (2.) A dependence, more or less, on some good qualities in, or good actions done by, himself, the discovery of which enlivens his hope, and the supposed absence of which destroys it, and leaves him the prey of guilt and fear.

The following case frequently occurs. I see a person convinced of sin, humbled for it, seriously apprehensive of its awful desert, dreading the anger of an offended God, and desirous, above all things, of escaping from the wrath to come. I will suppose that person to be also, in some degree enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, convinced of the value and efficacy of his blood, and earnestly wishing to be interested in him; he looks to Jesus as his only refuge, and, at times, possesses a humble, feeble, variable hope. When attending divine ordinances, when hearing the heart-cheering doctrines of grace, when listening to the charming invitations and promises of Christ, his heart is warmed, his fears subside, and his soul is happy. But, alas! this pleasing frame soon vanishes; he looks again at himself, he feels that he is yet a sinner, his tears return, and he is again miserable.

Methinks I hear such a one exclaiming "It is true; the Gospel is most excellent, and Jesus Christ is infinitely precious: but what pretensions have I to his blessings? I, who am every way so unworthy and vile!—I, who am the chief of sinners! If I look at my prayers, they deserve not the name of prayers, they are so cold, so wandering! My corruptions are many and strong; surely, real Christians are not like me; and as to my religious attainments, they bear no proportion to those of others, nor to the many privileges I have enjoyed. I look for the acknowledged evidences of a gracious state, and I can find but few, and sometimes none at all. What then must I do?"—And if a person in this state of mind should, at the same time be the subject of such diseases as enervate the body, and depress the spirits, he may be reduced to a pitiable condition; and if to all this be added the assaults of the Tempter, who will not fail to take the advantage of his weakness, he may be brought low indeed, and walk for many days in the valley of the shadow of death.

But what is the meaning of these complaints? What is the genuine language of these feelings and fears? Is it not this? I want to find something good in myself to build my hope upon; or at least, something so good as may encourage me to hope in Christ; for I cannot think of trusting in him just as I am. If I were more humble, and more holy, then, perhaps, he would receive me, and I might venture, without presumption, to hope in his mercy.—Few persons will perhaps speak thus, in so many words, but this is the real meaning of their objections; they want the "wine and milk of the Gospel, and they are come "to the waters" for them; but they are not yet content to "buy without money and without price." (Isa. lv. 1.) They are not content to let Christ "justify the ungodly,"—or to "save that which is lost"—and "without strength!" but they wish to find some previous *qualification* in themselves; and for want of this they despond.

Here then are those imperfect views of the Gospel which prove such an hindrance to the exercise of simple faith, believing the testimony and promises of God concerning Jesus Christ, and concerning all those who look to him, receive him, come to him, and trust in him. For to those who are in the state we have described, this is the remedy proposed. Isa. l. 10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord," (that is, in Christ) "and stay upon his God." In the absence of every other source of consolation, let him trust alone in the all-sufficient Redeemer. A belief that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, and will cast out none that come to him, will relieve the burthened mind at once, and afford peace and joy;—peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart.

Another great hindrance to the joy of faith is making too much of EVIDENCES; that is, building too much upon them, and deriving hope from them rather than from Christ himself and the atonement of his blood.

I would not discard Evidences; God forbid! the Scriptures of truth propose them. For instance, "To you who believe, he is precious." "If ye love me keep my commandments." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—From these and many similar passages, the Christian may warrantably derive comfort: and the truth of our faith must be tried by the fruit of our faith,—for true "faith worketh by love."

It is not against the *use*, but against the *abuse* of Evidences that we argue. Let them have their proper, that is, their secondary and subordinate place; but let us first look to Jesus, exhibited in the testimony and promise of the Gospel; and with confidence rely on divine faithfulness to make those promises good to *us*; for, if we are not on our guard our minds may be strangely diverted from Christ, to a dependence not upon his work *for us*, but rather to that wrought *in us*, the imperfection of which will always render our peace imperfect.

Let the Christian examine himself. He ought to do it. Let him inquire into the state of his heart, and "prove his own work;" but let him look where and at what he may, he will find defects and imperfections; such imperfections as will often leave him in doubt whether his graces are genuine or not; and the deeper acquaintance he has with the deceitfulness of his own heart, the greater will be his suspicions and the less his confidence; so that, after all his inquiries, he will find it necessary to resort to the Saviour, and build his hope alone on him.

But Evidences are chiefly abused when they are made meritorious qualifications for trusting in Christ; when they are made the foundation of our claim to the pardoning mercy of God, through the blood of Jesus. If the language of the heart be.—"If I am deeply humbled for sin; If I can pray with fluency and fervency; if I can overcome my corruptions, and practise the duties of holiness, then may I venture to come to Christ and hope in him." But this is reversing the proper order of things; for we are not first to make ourselves holy, and then apply to Christ for pardon; but we are first of all to believe the Gospel and receive a free pardon from him, and then, being "sanctified through faith in him," we are to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory of the Father. To do otherwise, to attempt to make ourselves, in any way or degree, worthy of Christ, is only to imitate (though in a refined and delusive way) the conduct of the self-righteous Jews, lamented by St. Paul, "who went about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of Christ." Rom. x. 3. If this course be pursued, their hopes will rise or fall with every change of frame: I had almost said with every change of weather.

Having, as I trust, detected a great mistake, let me now point out a more excellent way: let me direct your attention to the following particulars:—

I. The Facts recorded in the Gospel:
II. The Testimony and Promises of God connected with them;
III. The Credence to be given to these; and,
IV. The happy effect of giving that Credence.

The Gospel includes a series of the most important events that ever took place in our world, and which took place exactly in the manner which had

been predicted from age to age by the prophets. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son;" "God was manifest in the flesh." He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by voices from heaven, by numerous and undeniable miracles, and by his resurrection from the dead. He was without sin in his nature; he committed no sin in his life; he obeyed all the precepts of the law without failure; he endured the penalty which the law denounces against transgressors; that so what the law could not do, namely, justify us, because we are sinners, God has done another way; that is, by condemning and punishing sin, in the person of his Son; making him a sin-offering for us, that we might be treated and accepted as righteous in his sight, the righteousness of Christ being put to our account, as our sins had been put to his account. These are the principal facts recorded in the New Testament.

II. Let us next notice the Testimony of God concerning these facts, with the promise of eternal life to all believers. We are to receive these facts and the doctrines connected with them, not as the traditions of men, or of public rumours, but on the authority of God, who requires our belief of them. He has commanded this Gospel to be preached to all the world, accompanied with this solemn sanction:—"He hat believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. He has commanded that Repentance and Remission of Sins shall be universally preached; together with an assurance that whosoever believeth on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life; that his blood cleanseth from all sin; and that believers having passed from death unto life, shall never come into condemnation.

The Gospel also abounds with gracious invitations to the guilty and unworthy, requiring sinners to come to Christ and receive mercy and peace, "with-

out money and without price;"—that is, without any meritorious qualification; and lest any should be discouraged by a sense of their guilt and vileness, he has made this most generous declaration:—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:" Yea, he has added his authority to his invitation, saying, by St. John, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." Surely then it can be no presumption, even in the most guilty sinner, to come to Christ that he may have life."

III. Here then comes in the Credence before mentioned—a simple and sincere belief of the Testimony that God has given of his Son, and a reliance on the promises made respecting salvation by him. When God sets before us his dear son, and with him salvation, we must either believe or disbelieve what he says. Thus the apostle John states the matter in his First Epistle, chapter the fifth:"—"There are three who bear record (or testimony) in Heaven.—The Father, The Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One; and the testimony in which they unite is this:—"God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Eternal life is a free gift, not a purchase, not the reward of human merit; and this life is procured by the death of his Son, and treasured up in him for all who by faith apply for it. This all real Christians do: but all others, who, rejecting this testimony, expect life in another way, treat the God of truth as if he were a liar, ver. 10; which is the greatest and most destructive sin that a mortal can commit.

This belief of the truth includes of course, a rejection of every other plan of salvation as false, dishonourable to God, and ruinous to man: while the believer thus "comes to Christ," "receives Christ, trusts in Christ,"—all which expressions are descriptive of true faith. Thus God is honoured by

taking him at his word; thus Abraham, the father of the faithful, trusting to God's faithful word, and disregarding all the seeming difficulties of its accomplishment, was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." In like manner, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, "judged him faithful who had promised;"—and this is all that faith can do.

IV. Let us, in the last place, contemplate the happy effect of thus believing. Elizabeth pronounced Mary "blessed," because she believed the promise, and because the promise would certainly be fulfilled; and thus we may, without hesitation, pronounce every believer to be a happy person. The first question we ask, when good tidings reach us of some great event which nearly concerns us is, Are they true? And if their truth be established, we naturally rejoice. The tidings of safety when in danger,—of peace when at war,—of wealth to the indigent,—of health to the sick,—of pardon to the criminal, fill the mind with pleasure and delight; so if the good message and gracious promise of God in the Gospel be fully credited, "joy and peace in believing" will be the happy result.

And the practical effect will be happy too, for it is a certain truth that faith worketh by love. It is possible indeed thal bad men may abuse good doctrines, and turn the grace of God into licentiousness; but we dare appeal to the history of the church in all ages, not excepting the present, that this "grace of God" for which we plead, "teacheth true believers that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world," and thus to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Yes; he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself from the pollutions of the flesh and of the world. So Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those ancient believers, embraced the Gospel promise, and were not ashamed to confess

themselves pilgrims and strangers upon earth; and so St. Paul, the great champion of these truths, declared, That by faith in the cross of Jesus he was crucified to the world, and the world was crucified to him.

## CONCLUSION.

What has been said may account for the fear and dejection of many serious persons. The life of faith, in looking at unseen things, and trusting in an unseen Saviour, is so remote from our ordinary affairs, that it is difficult to attain it. We are strongly inclined to depend upon our frames and feelings, and to derive our comfort from any thing rather than from the word of God. We have, therefore, great reason to be ashamed of our unbelief, and to cry earnestly to God, in the language of one of old, "Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief!"

We may also learn, from what has been advanced, that the way to be truly happy is to rely with confidence on the word of God. If we honour God by trusting his word, he will honour us by granting the light of his countenance. Let it, then be the language of our hearts, "Remember the word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope:" or, as expressed in another place, "Do as thou hast said."—When is it that the Christian finds his mind relieved from the load of guilt? when does he experience peace, and hope, and love, and joy, but when he hears, or reads, or thinks on the love and grace, the blood, and righteousness, and intercession of the Divine Saviour? It is this, probably, that renders the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper so eminently useful, and so delightful to the believer; because then his eye is withdrawn from every object except Christ crucified, and his simple business is to receive him as therein exhibited.

Finally. This happiness is promoted by a well-grounded expectation of the promised blessings. Blessed art thou, believer, because there shall be a performance of all the things told thee by the Lord! Did Abraham, after long waiting, receive the Son of promise? Was Israel delivered from Egypt, and settled in Canaan, according to the word of God? Did Christ appear at the appointed time? did he suffer and die, and rise, and descend, according to the Scriptures? So, be assured, Christian, that God will be faithful in fulfilling to thee all that he has promised; and, when you arrive in the heavenly Canaan, Joshua's appeal to Israel will be adopted, "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

## HYMN.

O why should doubts and fears arise?
Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?
Slowly, alas! our mind receives
The comfort that our Maker gives.

O for a strong and lasting faith,
To credit what th' Almighty saith!
T' embrace the message of his Son,
And call the joys of Heaven our own!

Then, should the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls would fear no more,
Than solid rocks when billows roar.

Our everlasting hopes arise
Above the ruinable skies,
Where the eternal Builder reigns,
And his own courts his pow'r sustains.

WATTS.

*The Doctrine of Providence practically improved.*

# SERMON XCII.

LUKE. XII. 7.

*But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

THE belief of a Divine Providence, exercised towards us in all places and circumstances, especially in times of great danger, is the best antidote possible against the fear of man; and it was for that purpose our blessed Lord spake these words to his disciples. In the fourth verse of this chapter it is written, "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him;" and in a parallel passage, Mathew x. 16, after he had fully apprised them of the dangers to which they would be exposed when preaching his Gospel, he assures them that his good providence should watch over and defend them; and that not only their more noble and vital parts should be regarded, but that the very hairs of their head being numbered, not one of them all should, without his permission, perish. By this strong expression, which was perhaps proverbial, the universality of God's providence is fully established;—and

this is a subject to which we should often advert; for on our firm belief of it depend, in a great measure, our prayers, our praises, and our consolation. The whole of practical religion stands connected with this doctrine, and from it we may learn many important and salutary lessons. My intention is,—

I. To prove that the Providence of God extends to all human affairs; and,

II. To point out the practical uses we should make of this doctrine.

I. Let us establish, by reference to the Scriptures, this great and important truth,—that the Providence of God is universal; that it extends to all creatures and things throughout the whole world; but, as that concerns us most—especially to all human affairs.

By the Providence of God, we mean his preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions. He is in every place, beholding the evil and the good. All the heavenly bodies are sustained and directed by him. This earthly ball is his peculiar care. The seasons succeed each other in their appointed course; summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, are continued by his goodness. He makes the sun to shine, and the rain to descend, and the earth to bring forth abundantly for the service of man; yea, he openeth his hand, and supplieth the want of every living thing. In short, nothing is beyond nor beneath his notice.

1. This appears even from the light of nature; it seems necessarily to follow from his being the Creator of the world; for it is reasonable to believe, that he who made all things, governs all things. "The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead," may be "understood by the things that are made;" so as to leave, without excuse, the heathen themselves; who, instead of glorifying him as God, worship the works of their own

hands. (Rom. i. 18--20) And we are told, Acts xiv. 17, that God did "not leave himself without witness," even among those who have no Bible; because he in his providence, "did them good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness."

The existence of God, a Being of infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness, obliges us to believe that he will take care of his creatures. Not only men, but even brutes are tenderly concerned for their young; and can we suppose that the Father of the Universe will neglect his offspring, or that he will forsake the work of his own hands? No; we must conclude, that, if he has all the power, he *can;* and, if he has all goodness, he *will* extend his kind regard to the whole creation.

2. But we have clearer light and fuller proof of this from the Bible, God's own revelation of himself. In that holy book, which we are sure was inspired by him, the Providence of God is every where asserted; and, indeed, a great part of the Bible is a history of that Providence, as it has been exercised from the beginning of the world.

There we read that God is the great Preserver. "What shall I do unto thee," said holy Job, "O thou Preserver of men!" And the Psalmist exclaims, "How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. O Lord, thou preservest man and beast." And in the book of Nehemiah, the good Providence of God is celebrated in these exalted strains:—"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth, and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein; *and thou preservest them all!*"

The predictions of future events, and their fulfilment, of both which the Scriptures afford very numerous instances, furnish us with another proof of

the reality of a Divine Providence; for if God do not govern the world, he could not foretell what would come to pass. God forwarned Noah of the flood, 120 years before it came. He foretold the bondage of Israel in Egypt; how long it should last; and how they should be delivered. The captivity of Judah was foretold long before it happened; how many years it should continue; by whom, and by what means the people should be restored, and the temple rebuilt. All the circumstances relating to the birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ were exactly predicted; and so were the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dreadful miseries of the Jews;—all were so exactly foretold, that the predictions appear almost like a history of the events; and demonstrate, beyond all doubt, that God's Providence extends to all things.

God, who *preserves* all creatures, *governs* them also. He does not commit the management of the world to deputies, as many of the heathen supposed; for they thought he was too great a Being to trouble himself with the little affairs of mankind; but this notion was by no means honourable to the Deity: they judged of the great God by great men; who, from their limited powers, find it impossible to manage many great concerns, and are therefore obliged to commit much to inferior officers; but the God with whom we have to do is everywhere present at one and the same time, and sees and knows all men and all things; yea, even the secret thoughts of the heart; and being possessed of all wisdom, power, and goodness, can with the utmost ease govern all his creatures and all their actions.

"The Lord reigneth." "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again; he looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty." (Job xii. 18, &c.) He taught Jere-

miah, that as easily as a potter altereth the form of a lump of clay, he can alter the state of a nation; either to pull down and destroy it, if wicked; or to build and plant, and cause it to prosper upon its repentance. (Jerem. xviii. 1—10.) This lesson did the king of Babylon learn by painful experience: he was taught "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Dan. iv. 25.

And if God thus govern the nations of the earth, he will surely exercise his special Providence in the *church;* for of that he says, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." All things were made "by Christ and for Christ;" and the earth was formed chiefly to become the theatre on which the great affairs of human redemption were to be transacted; and when these are all accomplished, the earth itself shall be burnt up and demolished. Jesus Christ is "King in Sion," and "Head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all."

The Providence of God is to be owned in the affairs of *families;* it is he who forms them: "God setteth the solitary in families; he setteth the poor on high after affliction (as he did Job) and maketh him families like a flock;" in other cases he reduceth them, and removes one after another of them to the grave, or "they are minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction, and sorrow." (Psal. cvii.) In all these changes let the hand of God be acknowledged.

Nor are *individuals* beneath his notice, as the text plainly imports; not even the least of their concerns, "for the hairs of their head are all numbered;" consequently all their more important concerns. Thus prayed pious Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel,—"The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the

poor out of the dust, and lifted up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them." (1 Sam. ii. 6, &c.) Thus also spake God, by his servant Daniel, to the impious king Belshazzar:—"The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Let us then remember our entire dependence on Divine Providence for life, and breath, and all things; and say with Job—"Our days are determined; the number of our months is with him, and he hath appointed his bounds, which we cannot pass." Job, xiv. 5.

And as to good men, to believers in Jesus, we know that they are "the Temples of the living God;" as God hath said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." His Providence is so concerned about them and all their affairs, that "all their ways are ordered by the Lord:" he has promised to "guide them with his eye," and, whatever may befall them, to "make all things work together for their good."

Even as to those events which we call *contingent* or *accidental*, even they are under the direction and control of the Almighty. What can seem to be more casual than a *lot*, but the lot itself falls according to the Divine appointment; so Solomon tells us, Prov. xvi. 33:—"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." On this account, good men have had recourse to a lot, when unable, by human prudence, to make a proper decision; and thus an apostle was chosen in the room of Judas:—and, by the way, this shows the impropriety of using the lot by way of amusement, as is done in cards and other games. An appeal to the decision of Providence, whether intended or not, is of too grave an import to be allowed in the pastimes of men. Great events often turn upon a very small pivot. A sudden thought in a man's

heart, a single sentence from a man's lips, may lead to immense good, or to incalculable evil, as the history of the world abundantly shews.

This Providence of God, the existence of which we have clearly proved, is *sovereign,—wise,—mysterious,*—and *good.*

*It is sovereign* and incontrollable.—Who hath resisted, who can resist, his will? That will is accomplished among "the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; none can stay his hand," none can prevent the execution of his purpose.

*It is wise,*—his work is perfect,—all his ways are judgment. He cannot err: He cannot be deceived or mistaken; "He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works:"—yet, sometimes

*It is mysterious,*—"clouds and darkness are round about him;" "his ways are in the sea, and his footsteps in the waters:" we cannot trace his path; his proceedings may sometimes puzzle and perplex us. The righteous are afflicted, oppressed, persecuted; while the wicked prosper, flourish, and have more than heart can wish. We may not be able to account for these things; but we are sure that his Providence is

*Always good.*—"Truly, God is good to Israel." "His eyes," directing all human affairs, "run to and fro throughout the earth;" and for what purpose? "To shew himself strong" in behalf of all that fear and love his name. Yes, assuredly; for "all things work together for the good" of his people.

II. We now proceed to the second part of the subject; namely, To point out the practical uses we ought to make of the doctrine of Providence.

This doctrine is, in truth, connected with the whole of Practical Religion. Take away providence, and you destroy the whole system of godliness, and leave no room for prayer or praise. Persons, therefore, should be well established in the belief of this truth, and be able to say with the Psalmist, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily, he is a God that judgeth (or governeth) in the earth." Ps. lviii. 11.—Persuaded, then, of this truth,

1. Let us stand in awe of the great Ruler of the world. Do his eyes behold? his eye-lids try the children of men? Is he in every place, beholding the evil and the good? In his hand is our breath and all our ways? Who, then, shall not fear him? who shall not tremble at his presence? Is the wrath of a king like the roaring of a lion?—surely, then, the King of Kings is above all to be feared. Do many seek the Ruler's favour? and shall not we esteem his favour the greatest of all benefits, and his loving kindness to be better than life? Yes; let us seek him with our whole heart, and be at peace with him, through faith in Jesus Christ; then we may be sure that our heavenly Father, who doth his own holy will among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, will so order all our concerns, that they shall promote his glory and our eternal welfare.

2. Let us rejoice that the reins of universal government are in the hands of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord; of him who is our Mediator, our Redeemer, our Brother, and our Friend.

When his coming into the world was, long before that period, predicted, the Prophet (Ps. xcvi. 11.) calls upon "the heavens, the earth, the sea, the fields, the woods, to rejoice and be glad;" for, saith he; "He cometh! he cometh to judge (that is, to govern) the earth; he shall govern the world with

righteousness, and the people with his truth." This hath been accomplished. He came, he taught, he died, he rose, he ascended into Heaven, and took his seat at the right hand of God;

> "And now he lives, and now he reigns,
> And sees the fruit of all his pains."

"All power (saith he) is given to me in heaven and in earth;" and all this power is exercised for the good of the Church. "All things are yours—Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, and the world, and life and death, and things present and things to come: all are yours; and yours, because ye belong to Christ," who is "Head over all things to the Church, which Church is his body,—the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Surely, then, the Christian ought to rejoice "that the Lord reigneth."

3. The doctrine of Providence shews the propriety and utility of Prayer; it affords the strongest motive, and the best encouragement to that duty. Were there no Providence, who would pray? or to what purpose would any one pray? Nor does the appointment of God render prayer needless or useless, as some have pretended. If all things are previously appointed of God, say they, of what use is prayer? We answer, That He who has appointed the end, has also appointed the means, of which prayer is the chief. So David wisely argued, when he prayed thus (2 Sam. vii. 27): "O Lord of Hosts, thou hast revealed unto thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house;"—he then adds, "*therefore* hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." Let us imitate his example, and turn the promises of God into prayers: such prayers will surely speed. He who says in our text, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," himself directs us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and, for our encouragement in offering this and other petitions, we are reminded, in the close of the prayer

that the kingdom of Providence belongs to him;—"*for*"—"thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory;"—thine, O Lord, the kingdom of universal nature, providence and grace;—thine the fulness of almighty power;—thine the glory of infinite perfection; and to thee be the praise of all ascribed for ever and ever. Amen.

4. The doctrine of Providence shews the propriety of offering to God the sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving. Does "every good and every perfect gift come down from above,—from the Father of Lights?" Surely, then, the sacrifice of praise is a reasonable service. "What shall I render to God for all his benefits?" is a reasonable inquiry; and, "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! and let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing"

5. It shows the propriety of submission to the will of God. Does the Lord rule? Submit to his government. "He is righteous in all his ways: holy in all his works." He cannot err. He doth all things well. What, if severe afflictions befall thee? say, as Aaron, when both his sons were cut off for their transgression: "It is the Lord! let him do what seemeth good in his sight!"—and as David, when, in the depth of his affliction, Shimei basely cursed him: "Let him curse: it may be, the Lord hath bidden him curse!"—and as Job, when bereft of his property and his family: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Yea, say with our holy Redeemer, when enduring the unspeakable agonies of the garden: "the cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink of it?" We are ignorant and short-sighted creatures; we cannot understand nor comprehend the plan nor the reasons of the Divine Government. Solomon says, "No man

can find out the work that God makes, from the beginning to the end." Eccles. iii. 11.—It is but a small part of his work of providence that we behold; not the beginning, nor the end: let us, therefore, "judge nothing before the time;" but believe assuredly that "he doth all things well;" and that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter."

6. Improve the doctrine of Divine Providence, as a remedy against Anxiety. Thus our Lord improves it, when he cautions his disciples against anxious cares about futurity; "Behold the fowls of the air, and behold the lilies of the field;" Providence provides for the support of the former, and clothes the latter with splendid beauty: why should *you* care, who are far superior to them? and especially when you recollect that the God of Providence is your Father; that he well knows your necessities; and that, if you seek him and his kingdom, all these things shall be given you in addition." Hath he not said, "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing?"—and again, "There is no want to them that fear him." Psal. xxxiv. 9, 10.—Yes: let the pious poor especially, remember this for their comfort, That "Godliness is profitable unto all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come!" 1 Tim. iv. 8.

7. Finally. Let this subject lead our minds forward towards the future and eternal world. In the conduct of Divine providence, we meet with many mysterious events. The wicked greatly prosper,—while the righteous are deeply afflicted. Useful men are often cut off in their youth; while many noxious sinners grow old in rebellion. The pious are persecuted, and their oppressors flourish. Be it so: and let it appear to be mysterious; yet, this is no impeachment to the wisdom, justice, and

goodness of God. The wicked prosper; but it is only as the beasts in a good pasture, fattening for slaughter. The righteous suffer; but it is only the discipline of that school, in which they are training up for glory. Heaven will explain all, and make amends for all; and then shall the whole Church of God, redeemed and glorified, with one accord exclaim,—"He hath done all things well!"

## HYMN.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face!

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding ev'ry hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind Unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

COWPER.

*Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, derived from Christ.*

# SERMON XCIII.

1 Cor. i. 30.

*But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom,—and Righteousness,—and Sanctification,—and Redemption.*

THIS is one of the most comprehensive texts in the Bible. It is a short, but full inventory of the invaluable blessings of the Gospel; enough to make a poor a sinner rich, and a miserable sinner happy. Yes; thrice happy is the man who possesses these! Oh! that they may be ours!

To Corinth, that great, populous, and wicked city, the Lord directed the steps of his faithful servant Paul, about the year 51. After being, in a great measure, rejected at Athens, he repaired to Corinth, where he found Aquila and Priscilla; wrought with them at their trade of tent-making; and preached in the synagogue, but it was "in weakness, fear, and much trembling,', on account of the unbelief of the Jews, who "opposed themselves, and blasphemed:" but his Divine Master graciously appeared to him, and encouraged him to proceed, assuring him of safety and success. Thus strengthened, he continued there, and preached

nearly two years; and he found that the Lord had, as he said, "much people in that city."

The inhabitants of Corinth were great admirers of human eloquence; but Paul did not study to gratify them in their taste; his constant subject was "Christ crucified;" and his manner of treating it was purposely plain: and, although such preaching was, by some, accounted "foolishness," its success, in the conversion of many, proved that it was the "wisdom of God, and the power of God;', and thus it was that the whole glory of salvation was secured to him: no flesh could have any pretence to glory in his presence; but all the blessings conveyed through this Gospel to believers, were from God, through Christ, even 1. True Wisdom; 2. Perfect Righteouness; 3. Gospel Sanctification; and, 4. The final Redemption of the Body at the last day.

Let us speak of each of these briefly; and,

## I. *Of* Wisdom.

Wisdom is the power of judging rightly. It is more, and better than knowledge; for it is the application of knowledge to practical purposes. Wisdom chooses the best objects, and then pursues the best means of obtaining them. A wise man disregards trifles, and sets before him something that is truly great and good; he then considers by what means he may be able to make that object his own. With regard to the present world, he judges Health to be an invaluable blessing: he studies how to preserve, or to regain it. His worldly business, from which he derives his support, he keeps constantly in view, and studies daily how to promote it. If he has a family, he considers its maintenance, education, and peace, as great and important objects, and he labours uniformly to attain them. In all these things, and in a thousand more, "wisdom is profitable to

direct;" and, as Solomon says, "A wise man's eyes are in his head;" (Eccles. ii. 14.) that is, ready to discover the dangers that should be avoided, and the advantages that should be improved.

ALL wisdom is from God; all the natural powers of perception and instinct in inferior creatures, and especially all the superior powers of reason and judgment in men. It is he "who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven." And we see that these natural powers are capable of vast improvement by education and learning; and some men have become prodigies of science and wisdom.

But there is a peculiar kind of wisdom, far superior to every other, suited to man in his relation to God, and to his eternal destinies in a future state. This wisdom may be summed up in a word: it is RELIGION. We are fully warranted in asserting this, for God himself declares it (Job xxviii. 28): "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding;" and this St. Paul also terms being "wise unto salvation!"

This is "the wisdom that is from above,"—Christ is "made unto us Wisdom." He is the original source and fountain of wisdom. He is "Wisdom" itself (Prov. viii.) and "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" (Col. ii. 3.) so that whatever true wisdom is found in the world, is derived from Him, even as the natural sun is the source of all the light of this world. Jesus is "the Sun of Righteousness,"—"a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel."

Accordingly, we find him, by his personal ministry, diffusing wonderful light throughout Judea and Galilee; declaring the nature and perfections of God his Father,—explaining the spirituality and extent of his holy law,—exposing the hidden depravity of the human heart,—exhibiting the spiritual nature of his kingdom,—and expressing the grand design of his coming,—"to seek and save the lost," and to

"lay down his life as a ransom," for captive sinners.

And when he ascended into Heaven, he committed this work to the Holy Spirit, who as "the Spirit of Christ," has ever since continued with the Church as its great and effectual Teacher. What marvellous works were effected on the day of Pentecost! and how numerous were the early converts to Christianity! And from that period until now, he has resided on earth, accompanying the word of the Gospel with Divine energy. "The natural man," that is, every man by nature, "knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God;" but, by His gracious help, "they are spiritually discerned," and believers learn "the mind of Christ."

This is the *true wisdom.* Other kinds of wisdom have their value: they may be necessary to the comfort of human life; they may entertain and elevate the possessor; they may obtain wealth and fame: yet, after all, what do they avail? "I have spent my life," said a great scholar on his dying bed, "I have spent my life in *laborious trifling!*"—and trifles indeed, trifles light as air, will all our pursuits prove, if "the one thing needful" be forgotten, or if "the great salvation" be neglected. Compared with heavenly wisdom, all literary attainments will be as a grain of sand to a mountain, or a drop of water to the ocean. If any man, then, desire this spiritual wisdom, let him ask it of the only wise God, our Saviour, and let him search for it daily, as for hidden treasure, in the Bible,—God's holy book of true and heavenly wisdom.

II. *Jesus Christ has made unto us* RIGHTEOUSNESS.

By righteousness we understand perfect conformity to the will of God, as expressed in the law of the Ten Commandments. The word signifies *that which is full weight or measure,* the standard being

that holy law. That law requires perfect and supreme love to God, without any failure, in thought, word, or deed! And is there any man thus righteous? No; there is not a just man upon earth; that is, one that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Yet without a perfect righteousness, no man can be justified;—for to be *justified*, is to be declared righteous; and can the God of truth declare a man righteous, when he is *un*righteous; that is, when he is a sinner? The fact is "all have sinned," whether Gentiles or Jews: the former against the law of Nature; the latter against the revealed law of God, "Every mouth" (that would plead excuse or merit) "must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." It follows, then, by necessary consequence, that "by the deeds of the law," or what men usually call good works, "no flesh can be justified in his sight." So the apostle Paul concludes in the second and third chapters of his epistle to the Romans.

But must we, then, despair? Yes; of making ourselves righteous; but not of becoming righteous by other means; for, according to our text, "Christ is made unto us righteousness." It is the principal design of the Gospel, to publish and proclaim the Righteousness of Christ; that is, the perfect obedience of Christ unto death, as the sole ground of our acceptance with God; which righteousness being imputed to the believer (Rom. iv. 24.) he is accounted and declared to be righteous; so that, having "passed from death unto life," there is no longer any condemnation unto him; for "the law of the Spirit of life" (that is, the Gospel) "hath made him free from the law of sin and death. Thus David, in ancient times, described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Rom. iv. 6, 7.

But, do any object to this doctrine, and suppose that if our own goodness or works do not form the righteousness by which we are to be justified, we may therefore become careless about good works, and so make Christ "the minister of sin?" —let them attend to the third head of our discourse, which is to shew that,

III. *Jesus Christ is made unto us* SANCTIFICATION.

By Sanctification, we mean the renewing of our nature in the image of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the mediation of Christ.

Sanctification differs from Justification. Justification respects the *state* of man; Sanctification respects his nature, his disposition, his conduct. A man may be tried at a human bar for his life, and he may be acquitted and discharged; but if he have, at the same time, a mortal disease upon him, he will die. The province of a Judge and a Physician are very different. Justification is the act of God as a Judge; Sanctification is the work of God the Spirit, as the great Physician of souls; and we find both these works united in Psalm ciii. 3,—"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." The sinner is charged with a breach of God's holy law: but when he is enabled to believe, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is therefore acquitted and discharged; there is no longer any condemnation to him: but it is equally necessary that he be renewed and sanctified; for it is written, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

We must be very careful to distinguish between Justification and Sanctification; without which, much confusion, and some dangerous mistakes may ensue. We may, therefore, notice another difference: —Justification is perfect in this life;—not so our Sanctification. When the perfect righteousness of

Christ is imputed to us, we are at once perfectly justified: but Sanctification is a gradual work, and the remains of corruption are found even in the best of men. It is also to be observed, that our sanctification forms no part of our title to Heaven; that title is founded only on the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified; but in Sanctification consists our *meetness* for Heaven; and without it we should not be qualified to enjoy the pure pleasures, or engage in the sacred employments of that holy place.

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit; it is begun by his power in our Regeneration, whereby we become "new creatures;"—"old things being done away, and all things becoming new."

By nature we are blind and foolish; by grace we are enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and become wise to salvation. By nature the will is perverse and rebellious, opposed to the will of God, and enmity against him: by grace this rebellious disposition is subdued, and the believer cries, with converted Saul, "Lord! What wilt thou have me to do?" By nature the affections of the soul are corrupted, and wholly carnal; fixed on worldly, fleshly, and sinful objects; but by grace they become spiritual; they are fixed on God and Christ; on holy and heavenly things; all which is evidenced in its truth and power, by the correct, moral, holy, blameless, and useful conduct of the believer: the whole of this is summed up by St. Paul, in his prayer for the Thessalonians, 1 Epist. v. 23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our text informs us how we may obtain this great benefit,—the sanctification of our souls. We are told that "Christ is made unto us sanctification;" and let us now consider how he is made such unto us.

1. He is made unto us Sanctification, because he first relieves us by his atoning sacrifice, from the guilt and defilement of sin, which must be taken away, before we can be inwardly purified. "He washes us from our sins in his own blood:" and thus our Justification precedes our Sanctification.

2. It is by virtue of the *Intercession* of Christ that we are sanctified. As it was the especial design of Christ, in dying for us, that he might "purify us to himself, and make us a peculiar people, zealous of good works," so he ever lives, by his intercession to effect this. A delightful specimen of this is given us in the prayer which he offered for his apostles (John xvii. 9, 17.) "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that they may be kept from the evil;"—and were it not for the powerful intercession of our great Advocate, our enemies would prevail, and sin would have dominion over us. Jesus prays, and therefore it is that our faith faileth not.

3. It is by the *Word of Christ* that we are sanctified. The doctrines, the precepts, the examples, the promises and the threatenings of God's word, are the principal means of our sanctification. It is the Gospel chiefly, not the law, which is the instrument of purifying the soul. The law is the rule of obedience, in connexion with the New Testament, in which that original rule is amplified and its spirituality displayed; but the law alone will not make any man holy.

> "The law discovers guilt and sin,
> And shews how vile our hearts have been;
> Only the Gospel can express
> Forgiving love and cleansing grace."

And thus it was that the apostle Paul "died to the law, that he might live unto God."

4. It is by virtue of Union to Christ that we are sanctified. Christ is the Head of the Church; his people are the members of his body, and it is by their union with them that they receive strength and grace for every duty. "Out of his fulness," said the beloved disciple, "have we received, and grace for grace;"—grace in the believer, corresponding with the grace that was in him, our great example; and thus also he teaches us to "abide in him, as the branches in the vine," for separate from him we can do nothing; but, united to him, each believer may say as did St. Paul,—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

5. Christ is made unto us Sanctification, as he is the only perfect pattern of holiness. Example is allowed to be the most effectual mode of instruction, and far more prevalent than precept alone. There is something powerfully persuasive in a good example; something that secretly prompts us to imitation. Now Jesus Christ was appointed for this purpose, Angels would not have been perfect patterns, especially in that branch of sanctification which relates to the patient endurance of afflictions; but Jesus Christ is the perfect pattern, both of a cheerful activity, and of patient suffering; and he has "left us an example, that we should follow his steps." In our Christian course, therefore, let us be constantly "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." It is thus that "the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world;" it is thus that "we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

6. To all these considerations we may add, "the love of Christ;"—which is, of all motives to holiness, the strongest and most effectual. It was this

that animated the minds of the apostles to the utmost energy of action; it was that which fortified the hearts of the first Christians against all the terrors of persecution, and rendered them joyful and triumphant, even in the flames of martyrdom; for the love of Christ constrained them.

Would we then be holy? the way of holiness is plainly marked. We cannot obtain sanctification merely by dint of our own endeavours, though these are to be diligently employed, but by looking at Jesus, and by being united to him, deriving constant virtue from him; that, according to the prophet, each of us may say, "Surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

Thus we see how Christ is made unto us Sanctification; he is made this *to us;* from him we derive it; but it is not so *in him,* that it is not also *in us.* Some deny that holiness is a *personal* thing, and affirm that we have no holiness but in Christ: This is a great and dangerous mistake.

Holiness consists in a conformity to Christ; it is the renovation of our nature in the image of God. It is "dying to sin and living to righteousness," It includes the "mortification of sin" in our members. It includes "the fruits of the Spirit; as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Gal. v. 22. These are personal things; they are wrought in the hearts of believers, and produced in their tempers and lives. It is absurd to say they are in Christ, and imputed to us:—they are the effects of the Holy Spirit imparted to us, whose operations are compared by Christ himself to "a well of water within us, springing up unto everlasting life."

IV. It now remains that, in the last place, we show that *Jesus Christ is made unto us* REDEMPTION.

The Redemption here intended is not, I conceive, that of the Soul, but that of the Body. If

Christ be made unto us Wisdom, we are delivered from the powers of darkness. If he be made unto us Righteousness, we are redeemed from the curse of the law; and, if he be made unto us Sanctification, we are delivered from the dominion of sin. In these things consists the redemption of the *soul*. But the "Redemption of the body" seems to be intended; and this agrees with a passage in Rom. viii. 19, &c. where the apostle says, "The creature itself;"—that is, the human body of the believer "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption;" namely, by the Resurrection at the great day; then shall the whole man, body and soul, enjoy "the glorious liberty of the children of God:" and for this, he observes, that redeemed believers, now burdened with pains and sorrows, wait, earnestly longing for "the adoption; "that is, for the full "manifestation of the sons of God," when they shall be transformed, even in body, into his glorious likeness;—and this he calls "the Redemption of the body."

## CONCLUSION.

Here then we see in what real religion (true Christianity) consists. Here are all the blessings necessary to our eternal salvation. Without these, without *all* these, we perish. With these, we are safe and happy for ever.

Do *we* perceive the need of *Wisdom*, that we may be wise to salvation?—of *Righteousness*, that we may be justified?—of *Sanctification*, that we may be holy in heart and life? And if we do see the need of all these, do we know the only source from whence they can be derived? Remember that Christ is made all these unto us. He makes us wise; He constitutes us righteous; He makes us holy by the grace of his Holy Spirit. Let us then seek all these from him by prayer; let us receive all these from him by faith. Then may we also expect the crown-

ing blessing,—the redemption of the body. Our souls being admitted to glory immediately after death, our bodies shall rest in their graves till the resurrection: and then, O joyful and blessed day! both body and soul shall be made completely happy in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity!

Finally. Let us take care to give to God all the glory due unto him for these great and inestimable blessings. This is the principal design of the whole passage before us, as it is expressed in the verse after our text:—"that he who glorieth, may glory in the Lord." Not in himself; as man, proud man, is prone to do; but, as all these are the free gifts of God, bestowed upon the unworthy, let him say, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me; but to thy name be glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Amen.

# SERMON XCIV.

JUDGES XIV. 14.

*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.*

THESE words are a kind of parable, or riddle, proposed by Samson to his companions, soon after his marriage with a Philistine woman. Samson was a great conqueror of the Philistines, the adversaries of Israel, and yet is himself conquered by one of their women. It was well said to him by his father Manoah, "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" But his affections got the better of his judgment, and induced him to violate the laws of his God. While he was travelling along the road to pay her a visit, he was attacked by a furious lion; but, strengthened by supernatural power, he overcame and slew his ferocious enemy.

Some time after this event, returning by the same way, he stepped aside, as it was natural for him to do, to inspect the carcase of the lion, which still lay by the road side; when, to his great astonishment,

it had become a bee-hive; having been dried, probably by the great heat of the sun, the bees, which abounded in that country, had formed their combs in it, and it was filled with honey. Being hungry, he took of the honey, ate it, and proceeded on his journey. After his marriage, for the entertainment of the company, he put forth this riddle. They had not ingenuity enough to discover it, but had recourse to an unfair stratagem, which led to very serious consequences; yet, was it over-ruled, by the providence of God, for the destruction of many of Israel's enemies by the hand of Samson, who was raised up to be a scourge to the Philistines.

By the help of Samson's wife, who, by dint of tears and entreaties, extorted the solution of the riddle from him, they said, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?"

It was not in this instance only, that advantage has been found where it was least expected; for, in the course of God's wise and good providence, and in the experience of his people, it has often occurred, that food and sweetness—great spiritual advantages, have been derived from events which were threatening and forbidding in themselves, and as little likely to do them good as the carcase of a dead lion was to furnish sweet food for a hungry traveller.

It is in this view I shall consider the text; intending to illustrate the following observation:

*By the goodness of God, those things which once appeared unpleasant or injurious, become real blessings.*

1. This general observation may be applied to those painful convictions and apprehensions which sometimes harass the minds of beginners in religion.

It is absolutely necessary, in order to our obtaining pardon and eternal life, that we should know and feel that we are sinners; without this, there can

be no "repentance towards God, or faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;" for "the whole need not the physician, but they who are sick;" and Jesus came, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."—But, necessary as this conviction is, and the humiliation of soul that follows it, the enemy of mankind frequently takes occasion to disturb and distract the mind, and to suggest the improbability, or even the impossibility of obtaining mercy. Once, sin seemed such a trifle as not to be worth regarding; now, it appears to be so enormous that it cannot be forgiven.

Yet are these seasons of distress over-ruled for good. "They who sow in tears shall reap in joy; and they who go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with joy, bringing their sheaves with them." The first Christian converts, who in the bitterness of conviction said to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" soon "received the word gladly, and did eat their meat with gladness, praising God, and having favour with all the people." Many who have felt the deepest sorrow for sin, have, afterwards, possessed the greatest degree of religious joy, and have "loved much, because they knew that much was forgiven." Thus then, "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness."

2. The same may be said of divers temptations with which a Christian may be exercised. The temper is compared to a "roaring lion, who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" his aim is to destroy, by leading into sin, and keeping men in ignorance and unbelief! "Simon, Simon," said our Lord to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat;"—and indeed he did sift him. Peter boasted, was tempted, and fell. But the prayers of his great Advocate prevailed; he rose again, and became, by the temptation, more diffident and watchful than before; and, being re-

converted, he strengthened his brethren, as Christ had directed. When afterwards asked by his Master, "Lovest thou me more than these?" that is, more than these thy fellow-disciples, as once thou boastedst,—he modestly replied, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" but he would make no comparisons. His sermons and epistles breathe an excellent and a humble spirit, and show how much he profited by the temptation: and thus it is that believers in general learn to "watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation;" and while they "think they stand," are cautious lest they fall. Thus, "out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness."

We may apply this observation to various other trials to which the people of God are liable: To,

3. POVERTY, for instance. It is the lot of many, of very many good people, to be poor. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?" "Ye see your calling, brethren, not many wise, mighty, noble; but God hath chosen the foolish, the weak, the base." Poverty is, in itself, a great and sore evil, The scanty supply which the laborious poor obtain, with all their sweat and toil, is the sad effect of sin; for God "cursed the earth for man's sake; thorns and thistles (said he) shall it bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground:—in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." Gen. iii. 17.

The Great God, who wisely governs the world, and dearly loves all his children, is pleased to withhold from many of them those blessings and comforts which they cannot but earnestly desire; yet, even here, they gather honey from the carcase of the lion: for their various troubles give occasion for the exercise of humble resignation to the sovereign will of God. They learn from their afflicted Saviour to say, "Not my will, but thine be done."

The cup is bitter; but it is he who puts it into my hand, and shall I not drink it? Shall I "receive good at the hand of the Lord, and not evil also?" The Christian looks round him, and beholds the wicked prospering; "their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than the heart can wish;" but he does not envy them; he knows that they are rather objects of pity. His murmurings, if they arise, are repressed; he submits to the holy appointment of God; and looks for his good things in a better world.

Constant dependence upon God is hereby promoted. He who taught his disciples to pray,—"Give us day by day our daily bread," seemed by that petition to intimate that they would, generally, possess no store for the morrow; but be daily dependent on him for their needful supplies. Indeed, the rich as well as the poor depend upon the constant bounty of Heaven: but the former are not so sensible of it as the latter; these are, what God said he would leave in the midst of Israel,—"A poor and an afflicted people, who should trust in the name of the Lord."

Thankfulness is another fruit of sanctified affliction; for such is the forgetfulness and ingratitude of our hearts, that we are scarcely sensible of the value of our mercies but by the loss or suspension of them; and it is probable that many a poor cottager is more thankful to God for his mean habitation and slender fare, than the possessor of the castle or the palace, for his splendid abundance. Too often the rich and prosperous become proud, and forget God; but the truly pious will try to render unto him the praises due to his name.

Another advantage which may be gained from poverty is, That the Christian is led to seek the things that are above. "Men of the world have their portion in this life;" they are "carnally minded," and if the lusts of the flesh and of the mind can but be gratified, they care not for a fu-

ture inheritance. But the children of God would dread this state of mind as the greatest evil; and would far rather be the poor Lazarus at the gate, than the ungodly worldling in Hell; "for they have respect to the recompence of the reward." Thus then the pious poor may be said to obtain honey from the carcase of the lion.

4. Apply this sentiment to the person who is grievously afflicted with severe pains and bodily afflictions. We all love ease, and would gladly avoid pain; but our heavenly Father sees it needful to chastise us; and frequently, by exercising us with irksome and painful disorders. All this is wearisome to nature, for no visitation of this kind is "for the present joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby." If sin, the root of all suffering, be embittered; if tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; if under the pressure of personal affliction, our hidden corruptions are detected; if, like Israel, by their forty years trial, we learn what is in our heart; if strict and impartial examination be pursued, and our forgotten sins be brought to remembrance; and, finally, if holy resolutions be formed, and we cry, as it is meet we should, "We have borne chastisement; we will not offend any more,"—then is the purpose of divine and paternal goodness in the visitation accomplished; then may the Christian say, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes: before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept thy word." Psal. cxix. 67 and 71.

5. Domestic trials may produce the same advantages. It is in our own houses, and with our own families, that we expect the most pure and permanent pleasures; and, while these are enjoyed, we cannot be sufficiently thankful. But we are not to expect unmingled or uninterrupted delights. Hus-

bands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, are sweet and tender names, and they are the sources of much innocent enjoyment; but they may become, in the course of God's most holy and sovereign providence, the occasions of bitter grief and sorrow. If they are unfaithful, undutiful, unkind; if they are perverse, and wicked, and abandoned, how deep is the misery they excite! or, if they be kind, and pious, and useful, how do we share their pains and troubles, if they are afflicted: and if, as it must frequently happen, that relentless Death enters our houses, and snatches from our embrace the partners of our lives, or our dear and tender offspring, taking away the delight of our eyes with a stroke, and hiding from us in the dust, those who were dear to us as our own souls,—how bitter is the anguish!—"'tis the survivor dies!"

But is there no consolation in such cases? God never leaves his people destitute of comfort, or at least of sufficient sources of comfort. Not only should we submissively say "It is the Lord; let him do as seemeth good in his sight," but we may find honey in the carcase of the lion, and extract the most essential benefits from these severe exercises. See here:—in this loss, in that disappointment, in the other heavy cross, see and learn the vanity of creature-comforts. You have often read, and heard, and professed to believe, that "all is vanity, and vexation of spirit;" and here you find it is so. You leaned upon this reed, and it is broken; you took shelter under this gourd, and it is withered. Cease, then, from man, "whose breath is in his nostrils, for what is he to be accounted of." Remember likewise, "the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

6. The same may be said with regard to disappointments in our worldly affairs. In the conduct of trade and business, however wisely managed, however diligently followed, the most industrious and the most judicious may meet with reverses. The most pleasing and flattering prospects may be obscured by some unexpected failure of others, or sudden and unlooked-for losses; the wealthy man may be reduced, even to poverty; and his riches, having made themselves wings, have taken their flight, and left him poor and needy. How many such sad events have we lately witnessed in this commercial country, and in these changeable times!

But, under these distressing circumstances, the Christian must not give way to excessive sorrow,—that "sorrow of the world which worketh death." He must not repair to dissipation, that he may forget his troubles, much less to suicide, as too many have done. No; Grace will enable him, though, like Job, bereft of his whole substance, to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." If the Christian have lost his worldly goods, he has treasure laid up in Heaven, secure, beyond the reach of moth, and rust, and thieves; out of the power of dishonest servants, or fraudulent debtors, or crafty swindlers. And if he learn by the loss and failure of earthly goods, to "set his affections on those that are above," he becomes a real gainer. Thus have we often seen a little bird perched on the bough of a tree, disturbed or alarmed by some approaching danger, change his position, and flit from bough to bough, till at length, to get beyond the reach of harms, he spreads his wings, and soars to safer regions. And thus the ancient saints "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in Heaven a better and enduring substance;" "they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly;" they looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Heb. x. 34, and xi. 16.

7. Persecution is another of those evils to which the people of God are exposed; and persecution, in some form and in some degree, must always be expected by those who "will live godly in Christ Jesus." But it is a thing no less mysterious than grievous, that men should be abused for righteousness' sake; that the excellent of the earth, beloved of God, and heirs of glory, should be despised and ill-treated by their fellow-men. Yet thus it has been, must be, and will be, to the end. As long as there are men "born after the flesh," there will be hatred and opposition against those who are "born after the Spirit." But out of this unpromising lion, sweet honey has been procured. When, upon the dispersion of the disciples, occasioned by the martyrdom of Stephen, they travelled into distant parts, they "went everywhere preaching the word;" Judea and Samaria were the gainers. Persecution, while it opposes the truth of the Gospel, wonderfully confirms it. The prediction of Christ is fully accomplished, for he came not to send peace, but a sword; and though the gospel has the most powerful tendency to promote concord, it becomes, through the corruption of man, the occasion of the most cruel divisions; and thus, also, it proves the truth of the apostolic declaration, that the carnal mind is enmity against God.

8. The subject may even be extended to Death itself. The Death of Christ, though according to the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, was effected by the cruel hands of wicked men. Never was any murder so atrocious as that of the Son of God, the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory! In itself, it was the basest and most detestable action ever committed by apostate men. Then, the father of lies and the murderer of souls seemed to triumph; while the friends of the Redeemer were ready to despond. "We trusted," said they, "that it had been He who should have

redeemed Israel;" but his death had, for a season, extinguished their hopes. But bitter as seemed this event to the disciples, what ever produced so much sweetness? From the striking of this Rock, what copious streams of consolation have ever since been flowing to refresh the Church in the wilderness! All comfort springs from this source; and the triumphant song of Heaven shall be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

Apply this also to the Death of believers. Nothing to nature is so formidable as death; it is the king of terrors; and through the fear of it, many are, all their life-time, subject to bondage. The terrible sufferings that frequently precede it, the heart-rending separation it makes between the dearest relatives, the subsequent circumstances of the shroud, the coffin, the grave, the corruption, and the worms, all combine to render death the most horrible of human evils. Such, indeed, is the carcase of the lion; but search and see: is there no honey within? Is there nothing to lessen the terrors of the tomb, and reconcile man to the grave? Yes; there is much every way. The sting of death is extracted. That which makes death so awful is sin; but sin is pardoned; the believer is justified; he has "passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation." And not only so, but Death is *gain*—inexpressible advantage to the Christian. He leaves a troublesome world, a diseased body, a disordered soul—to be with Christ, to see his face, to behold his glory, to be perfectly like him, and to join the blessed society of saints and angels in the presence, and worship, and enjoyment of God.

'Tis good at thy word to be here;
'Tis better in thee to be gone.

## CONCLUSION.

1. Let us be led, by what we have heard, to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, in bringing good

out of evil. Christians! look back on the years that are past, and on the wilderness through which you have travelled, you may perceive the skeletons of those lions which have been slain, and from whose carcases you have taken honey. Sweet is the remembrance of evils surmounted, of enemies vanquished, and of terrifying disasters turned into blessings! And how divinely true is the scriptural maxim:—"All things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called, according to his purpose!" Set your seal to this truth, and give glory to him who made them thus salutary and beneficial.

2. On the contrary, it is painful to reflect on the state of natural and wicked men, who are unhappily so entirely under the power of sin and Satan, that they continually extract evil, even from good. Their health, their strength, their talents, their wealth, their tables, and all their comforts, are perverted and abused; like Jeshurun of old, they "wax fat, and kick against God." The word of God itself is abused and perverted; and they wrest to their own destruction, the Gospel of salvation; their prejudices are excited, and their hearts are hardened, by those very doctrines of the Bible which should humble them in the dust, and make them heartily thankful to be saved by grace alone.

3. Finally, What an argument may we derive from this subject, for the commitment of ourselves, and all our concerns, into the hands of an all-wise and all-gracious God! Let us not choose for ourselves, but commit our way to Him, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind. We are unable to comprehend the whole plan of his proceedings. We see but a small part, and cannot judge correctly of the whole. A child, looking at a clock or a watch, might suppose, that, because the wheels move in contrary directions, something must be wrong; and an ordinary spectator, viewing the movements of a

great and complicated machine, might be at a loss to know the tendency and result of the whole; while the artist who constructed it, knows well the use and design of every spring and wheel. So the great and blessed God, who knows the end from the beginning, orders all things, in his infinite wisdom, to produce the best effect,—the glory of his name, and the salvation of his people. Little did Joseph imagine, when cruelly sold by his brethren, when falsely accused by his mistress, when laid in the dungeon in irons, that all this should lead to the fulfilment of his prophetic dreams, his advancement to the government of Egypt, or the support of his father and brothers in the years of famine! Little did Job suppose, when deprived of his substance, of his children, of his health, and reduced to the lowest state of misery, that this should lead to prosperity, and honour, and happiness, greater than he ever knew before! "Cast," then, "all your care upon God, for he careth for you;" "be careful," that is, anxious, "for nothing; but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;—unto God, "who performeth all things for us." He who provided honey for Samson, out of the carcase of the lian; he who "meant for good," all the severities that Joseph suffered; he who "turned again the captivity of Job, and gave him twice as much as he had before,"—will, in his own time and way, give you a practical solution of Samson's riddle, and cause you thankfully to say,—"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

# SERMON XCV.

NUMBERS X. 29.

*We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.*

THE society of our fellow-creatures cannot but produce some effect upon us, either good or bad; its influence is very considerable; and much, therefore, depends on the choice we make of our associates. The constitution of our nature is such, that we readily, and often insensibly, imitate our companions; and are strengthened either in good or in evil by our connexions. Hence, the wisest of men long ago said, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Wicked men are very desirous of inducing others to concur with them; *they* also say, "Come with us, and we will do you good;" but they deceive and betray. On the contrary, good men earnestly wish, and would gladly persuade others to walk with them in the ways of God; and with great truth they may say, "We will do you

good." Thus, in the passage before us, Moses intreats Hobab (elsewhere called Jethro) his father-in-law, to accompany him, his family, and the children of Israel under his care, to the land of Canaan, the place which God had promised to give them; assuring him that it would be for his great advantage so to do. Now this is also the language of pious persons to their relatives, friends, and neighbours; they are fully persuaded that "it shall be well with the righteous;"—that their "labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;" and that a life of faith and holiness shall certainly be crowned with eternal felicity. They wish, therefore, that their friends and connexions may pursue the same course with them, and obtain the same happiness.

Accommodating the words to this purpose, we may derive from them the following observations:

I. God has spoken great and good things concerning the future state of his people.

II, They are now on their journey to take possession of their promised blessings.

III. They should invite and encourage others to accompany them.

I. We observe that God has spoken great and good things concerning the future and eternal state of his people.

We are not to consider this world as our rest, or final abode. Good men, in all ages, have acknowledged they were mere travellers. The patriarch Jacob, when asked by the king of Egypt how old he was, replied, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Gen. xlvii. 9. In like manner, David, though a king upon the throne, surrounded with all the

honours and luxuries of royalty, confesses himself "a stranger and a sojourner, as all his fathers were." Psalm xxxix. 12. And St. Peter uses the same language when writing to the Christians of his time, whom he exhorts, as "pilgrims and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Pet. ii. 11.

Hence it is, that men of religion have always looked forward to another and a better state. The patriarchs, to whom life and immortality was not so fully and clearly revealed as to us, possessed that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen: they lived and died in faith; confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth:" from which St. Paul infers that they "desired and sought a better country; that is, an heavenly one." Heb. xi. 13—16. Hence also it is that the primitive believers said,—"Our conversation (our traffic, our citizenship) is in Heaven:" our chief business is with that heavenly country to which we belong, and to which we are travelling. Phil. iii. 20,

This blessed expectation is grounded on the faithfulness of God:—"The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." He had said of Canaan,—the land that floweth with milk and honey, "*I will give it you.*" This promise he had made to Abraham 400 years before; and renewed it again and again to his posterity. Moses, therefore, speaks of it as absolutely certain; and promises Hobab a share in the goodly inheritance; and thus, to all believers, God hath made the promise of eternal life. Not only shall all their sins be pardoned, but there is a rest prepared for them; God intends to make them happy for ever in his own presence, where there is "fulness of joy; and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore."

The country promised to Israel was extremely beautiful and fertile. It is thus described (Deut. viii. 7, &c.): "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee

into a good land; a land of brooks of water; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness; thou shalt not lack any thing in it." Was not this delightful country a type of the heavenly world, an emblem of Immanuel's land? Yes; but the type is faint; it doth not yet fully appear what we shall *be*, or what we shall enjoy; it is enough to know "that we shall be with Christ, and that we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

II. Let us pass on to a second observation. Believers are now on their journey to take possession of this heavenly country: "We are journeying (said Moses to Hobab) to the promised place."

These persons believed the promise. Of old, a promise of rest was given; given generally; given to Israel at large; but the word of promise did not profit them, not being mixed with faith. Many of them disbelieved the promise; they denied the power and the faithfulness of God to fulfil it: and God, provoked by their unbelief, sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. The apostle, therefore, warns us against imitating their example, lest we also, "having a promise left us, of entering into his rest, should by any means, come short of it,"

These travellers to the heavenly Canaan, like those of old, have left Egypt. Once they were in bondage to sin, and Satan, and the world. They were "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another;" but since "the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared," they have been actually redeemed from their vain conversation; "their soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and they are escaped." Ps. cxxiv. 7.

Delivered from Egypt, they are now in the wilderness. Such, indeed, is "this present evil world," barren of good, fruitful only of sin, and infested by ferocious beasts; there roams abroad their deadly adversary the Devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may destroy;" there creeps the subtle serpent; who with his malignant and undetected wiles, deceiveth the whole world.

Yet here, even here, the manna falls about their tents: "he commands the clouds from above; he opens the doors of heaven; he rains down manna upon them to eat, and gives them of the corn of heaven; man eateth angel's food; he sends them meat to the full." Psal. lxxviii. 24, 25. Yea, their "heavenly Father giveth them the true bread from heaven;" even his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed: and partaking of which, they shall never die, but have everlasting life." John vi. 33, 51, 55.

Here too, they enjoy divine direction. Of old, when Israel was passing through the wilderness, a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, directed their march, and conducted them, by a right way, towards the city of habitations; and thus the Lord still "creates upon every dwelling-place of Mount Sion (the Christian church) and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night:"—or, in other words, Jesus Christ is the constant, gentle, unerring guide of his people; directing them by his word, his example, his Spirit, to avoid the dangers which surround them, and to persevere in the path to glory.

Like the ancient Israel, they have a sovereign and almighty Protector. "He looked through" the luminous cloud that directed their way, "and troubled the host of the Egyptians,"—so disconcerted their warlike and enraged pursuers, that they abandoned their enterprise, and in vain sought their own safety by flight: and thus believers may still say, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our

refuge;" and they may thence safely infer, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The cloudy pillar also served the purpose of a spacious umbrella, or salutary screen from the burning rays of the sun in a sandy desert; and thus also the Christian finds a cool retreat, "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," when he casts his burdens on the Lord; and, satisfied that "all things work together for good," resigns himself to the disposal of his all-wise and all-gracious Saviour.

Such being the privileges, and such the expectations of the Christian Israel, they cannot but wish their relations, their friends, and their neighbours to enjoy the same; which leads us to the third head of our discourse.

III. Travellers to Zion should invite and encourage others to accompany them;—as Moses said to Hobab,—"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

Moses was *related* to Hobab; and certainly our relations have the first claim to our pious regards. Hear how St. Paul expressed his earnest desires for the salvation of his kindred:—"I have great heaviness (said he) and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:" and the reason he gives is, that formerly, in his unconverted state, he did "wish himself accursed (or separated) from Christ:"—he was once like them and desired to have nothing to do with Christ; he could, therefore, feel for them and pity them; and his "earnest desire and prayer to God for them was, that they might be saved." Rom. ix. 1; and x. 1, &c. Thus should we pity and pray for those who are still walking in the broad road to destruction, and tenderly invite and entreat them to walk with us in the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. And there are several methods in which we may try to do this.

1. By inviting them to hear the Gospel faithfully preached. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." It is the ordinance of God for that purpose. He qualifies his ministers by spiritual gifts to preach the word; and has promised to be always with them, in their labours; it is good, therefore, to be found in the right way: it was thus the first disciples of Christ acted. When our Lord had called Andrew, Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus; and the day after, when he called Philip, Philip invited Nathaniel to come and see the Messiah whom he had found. In like manner, when the woman of Samaria had found the Saviour, she went her way into the city where she lived, and said to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" and in consequence of this, many came, heard, and believed, to the saving of their souls. Kindly invite, therefore, your relations, friends, and neighbours, to come and hear the Gospel of Christ, which has been so useful to yourselves, and it may be that God will make it an equal blessing to them.

2. We may promote the salvation of others by serious and affectionate conversation. We readily converse with our neighbours on the news of the day, whether it be good or evil. Why should we be backward to tell them the best news that ever reached our ears?—"the good tidings of the Gospel,—that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners?" Why should we cruelly refrain from warning them against the wrath to come? and exhorting them to flee for refuge to the great Deliverer? We are too often sinfully silent: "but a word spoken in season, how good is it!" and "a wholesome tongue is a tree of life." A single sentence wisely and kindly spoken, has often been made the means of conversion. Only let us take care to

make it evident that we wish to do good, and not to gratify our pride or our anger; let it be done in the spirit of our text,—"Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

3. The heads of families must endeavour to do good to their households by maintaining family-worship. This is the indispensable duty of a Christian master; and he criminally disregards the souls of his children and servants who neglects it. Reading the Scriptures, and offering up prayers every morning and evening (and not on the Lord's day only) is one of the most effectual means of doing good; and it is what God has eminently blessed to the salvation of multitudes. Let it be engaged in, in the fear of God, and you may confidently expect his blessing.

4. We may promote the salvation of the rising generation by giving encouragement to Sunday Schools, and other plans for the religious education of children. Some may assist them by subscribing towards their support; and others by their personal help. Young persons of piety and zeal may offer to God an acceptable sacrifice, by devoting a portion of their time and their talents to this great object:—an object of the most useful and laudable nature ever devised for the good of mankind, especially of the poorer classes of society. Yea, we may extend our invitation to fellow-creatures in the most distant parts of the world, by the encouragement of Missionary Societies. We may not be able *personally* to invite Turks, and Jews, and Infidels, to unite with us as Christians; but we may, by our prayers, and our contributions, enable others who are qualified and disposed for the work, to go to the Heathen, and preach among them, "The unsearchable riches of Christ."

5. The distribution of Religious Tracts is another method in which we easily invite many around

us to come and unite with us, that we may do them good. There is now a great variety of these provided, suited to every class and character of people, old and young, rich and poor, which may be procured in considerable numbers, at a very cheap rate; and which may be dispersed with great ease, and in many directions. God has been pleased so remarkably to bless this humble mean of doing good, that we shall be very blameable if we do not avail ourselves of it, and use it as extensively as we can.

6. But all these means must be accompanied with prayer. The blessing of the Lord alone can render them effectual. Let every effort then be begun, continued, and ended with prayer. Then may we reasonably hope to prevail with others to go with us, and then, by the blessed aid of the Holy Spirit, we shall do them real good.

7. Above all, and together with all, let our holy, blameless, and useful lives recommend the ways of religion to men. Many, perhaps, will be too much prejudiced against serious religion to listen to our advice, to go with us to the house of God, or even to accept or read our Tracts; still, let us endeavour to win them by our lives: thus, let us "hold forth the word of life." Let our meekness, our patience, our benevolence, our strict and uniform morality, recommend our religion, that so, as St. Peter directs, "they who will not hear the word, may be won by our conversation or conduct;" and be constrained, by the lustre of divine grace displayed in our holy and useful lives, to say, "We will go with you, for God is with you."

"*We will do you good.*" This is the argument we are to use; and truly, association with godly persons will be productive of great advantage. We *must* associate with some persons,—good or bad: and what will be the result? The wisest of men, as

before observed, declares, that "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Prov. xiii. 30.—Those who would be good, must keep good company; this shows that they really wish to be good, and it is one of the best means of becoming so. The company of good men will prevent much evil; it will prevent many temptations to it, or at least compliance with temptation: it will greatly promote our religious knowledge, for much may be learned from good men, as well as from good books and good sermons; not to the neglect of these, but in addition to them; and the example of good men will strengthen the inclination to good: while, on the contrary, "a companion of fools" (and all wicked men are fools) "shall be destroyed." Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Beware, then, young people, beware; and, "If sinners entice you, consent not. Walk thou not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path." Prov. i. 10, 15.

## IMPROVEMENT.

By way of improvement, let us ask ourselves, What influence have all the good things which God has promised in his Gospel had upon us? He has set before us his well-beloved Son; and in him, Pardon and Peace, Holiness and Heaven:—all we can want to make us happy in time, happy in death, happy to all eternity. And are we drawn by these cords of love? Are we induced to forsake the sins and vanities of the world? Have we set out on our journey towards heaven, determined to be fellow-travellers with the people of God?—or do we hesitate? Are we like unbelieving Israel, many of whom turned back again in their hearts towards Egypt,—and to whom God "sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest?" Let conscience

answer; and O "let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." Heb. iv, 1.

But let the humble and sincere traveller rest assured that he shall not be disappointed. "He is faithful who hath promised." He who promised all this good, will assuredly bestow it. So Joshua found it; and when Israel was put into full possession of the promised inheritance, he made the following appeal to the people:—"Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you: all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Jos. xxiii. 14.—What an encouragement is this to proceed! Believe then his word, and take courage; and go on your way rejoicing.

Christians, be excited by what you have heard, to imitate Moses, the man of God; and say, as he in our text said, to your relations, your friends, and your neighbours, "Come with us, and we will do you good." Are there none in your family, are there none among your acquaintance, whom you may thus invite? Think, enquire, try. You know not what good you may do: make the experiment. Should you, by the blessing of God, convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you will save an immortal soul from eternal death; and hide, for ever, the multitude of his sins. O! what a blessing would this be, both to him and to you!

And now, how would it crown the subject, if any, not before religious, should say, in the language of some persons of old (Zech. viii. 23.) "We *will* go with you;—and for this good reason, "we have heard that God is with you." God is indeed with his people; it is, therefore, good to go with them. Go with them to the house of God, to "set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy

word; and to ask for those things which are requisite as well for the body as the soul." Join the people of God in their sincere and fervent devotions; unite with them in the faith and hope of the Gospel; and walk with them in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blamelessly. Yea, say as the pious Ruth said to her mother-in-law Naomi, (Ruth i. 16.) "Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God: where thou diest, I will die; and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

*The Water and the Blood; or, Complete Purification.*

# SERMON XCVI.

1 JOHN, v. 6.

*This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood.*

IN these words the venerable writer, St. John, evidently alludes to a fact which he witnessed at Calvary, where he beheld the heart-breaking spectacle,—the Crucifixion of his adorable and beloved Lord, He notices this special circumstance in his Gospel history, John xix. 34, 35. "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." The Evangelist deemed this of peculiar importance, for he adds, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true." It was a law of the Jews, that the body of a malefactor should not remain all night on the tree, but it must be taken down before sun-set, and buried; it was, therefore, common, in order to hasten the death of the criminal, if not actually dead before the sun was setting, to break his legs; and this was done in the case of the two thieves who suffered with our Lord; but when the soldiers came to the middle cross, they concluded, from his

pale countenance, and his head, which reclined on his breast, that he was actually dead: yet, one of the executioners, either wantonly and insultingly, or to please the rancorous Jews, or more fully to ascertain that he was dead, pierced his sacred side with a spear. Whatever might have been the soldier's motive, an important point was thereby gained,—it was put out of the power of the Jews to pretend that Christ did not positively die; for, had not this fact been unquestionably certain, they would have had some plausible pretence for denying his resurrection from the dead: but the piercing of his side, and its effects, as here related, afforded a most certain proof that he really and truly died.

Anatomists inform us that there is a kind of bag, called the *pericardium*, in which the heart is placed, and which contains a small quantity of water;—this was pierced, and probably the heart also, in which case death must necessarily ensue, if it had not before taken place.

To this historic fact, the apostle here alludes; and he considers it symbolically. Water, it is well known, has been used, in all ages, to cleanse the body; and it has also been used religiously, as an emblem of the blood and Spirit of Christ, by which the souls of men are cleansed from sin.

The double design of the death of Christ seems to be pointed out by "the blood and water" which issued from his pierced side. The apostle therefore says, "he came by water and blood;"—"not by water only, but by water and blood."—He came not by water only;—he came not only to *sanctify* them, so that they might be pure and holy in their lives and conduct; but he came by "blood also;"—he came to shed his most precious blood, to expiate the offences of his people, to make a perfect and satisfactory atonement for sin, and thus

> "To be of sin the double cure,—
> To cleanse us from its guilt and power."

The object of this discourse is to shew that

The design of Christ's death was to procure both the JUSTIFICATION and SANTIFICATION of the Church.

The first part of this design is declared by St. John, in this epistle, chapter the 1st, verse the 7th: —"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Let us dwell a little on this heart-cheering truth, for cheering it is to all who are conscious of the defilement of their souls by sin. *Cleansing* is a term which supposes defilement; and sin is, in Scripture, represented as horribly defiling, rendering the soul impure, odious, and abominable, in the sight of God, who is perfectly pure and holy. So our Lord represented it, when he detected the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were scrupulously exact in washing their hands before eating, and in various external ceremonies of purification; but he, the great searcher of hearts, declares that, it "is by those things which proceed from the heart" that men are defiled; such as "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies;—these," said he, "these are the things which defile a man." These render a man unfit for communion with God in the present world; these disqualify him for admission into the heavenly state, where nothing that defileth can be admitted. Let none, then, deceive themselves in this matter: "If I wash thee not," said Christ to Peter, "thou hast no part with me;" and so he saith to us all.

And here let us pause a moment; and let each one ask himself—"Am I convinced of the defilement of my nature, and of my guilt as a sinner before God? Shame and self-loathing are the proper effects of such a conviction; but do I feel shame? Do I loathe myself, and cry with the leper,—"Unclean! unclean!"

When Ezra confessed the sins of his people "he

fell on his knees, and spread out his hands to the Lord, and said, "O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my God! for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens!"—Do *we* blush when we recollect and confess our sins?—When Job, though a good man, considered the glorious holiness and majesty of God, and contrasted with it his own sinfulness, he also cried, "Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" —Such was the humility and abasement of ancient saints:—what is ours?

If we are duly sensible of our sinful defilement, we shall certainly be anxious for cleansing. And how can this be obtained? The tear of repentance will not wash away our sins. The water of baptism cannot cleanse our souls. Nor is mere reformation and moral improvement sufficient. But, behold the divine provision! Behold the precious blood issuing from the wounded side of the Son of God! "This is he that came by blood." He came from Heaven on purpose, to give his life a ransom for us. Here behold the desert of sin: "The wages of sin is death." Justice demands the death of the sinner, but grace admits of a substitute; yea, provides one: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" who taketh away sin "by the sacrifice of himself;" for he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. (1 Pet. ii. 24.) "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: and the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all." (Isa. liii. 5, 6.) This is the great leading doctrine of the Gospel, and ought to be regarded, in the first place, by every one who desires salvation. This appears from the care which the Author of our religion took to keep up a constant attention to it in his church; for he has appointed the Sacrament of the Supper to perpetuate it. When, therefore, he instituted this ordinance, he said to his disciples, when he gave them

the cup, "This is *my blood* of the *New Testament*, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins;—this do, in remembrance of me."

In the *Old Testament* times, blood was shed,—sacrifices were offered,—and the sinner was taught that, "without shedding of blood there could be no remission;" but he was taught, at the same time, that cleansing was attainable by blood; and he was directed to look forward to the time when the Son of God should appear to finish transgression, and "to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity; and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Daniel ix. 24.

The blood of which we speak, procures the justification of all who believe. We are said, Rom. v. 9, to be "Justified through faith in his (Christ's) blood;" elsewhere, to "be brought nigh by his blood;" and again, to be "redeemed by his blood;" and, to be "washed from our sins in his blood." All these expressions show that it is by the sacrifice of Christ that sinners are justified, or declared to be righteous.

But it is "through faith" that we are thus justified; Jesus Christ is "a propitiation for our sins:" but it is "through faith in his *blood;*" it must be received by every man, for himself, in particular. Christ is held forth, *generally*, in the Gospel.—"Here," as if God said, "Here is my Son, and eternal life through him. Who among you desires to be washed in his blood, and saved from wrath through him?" "I (answers the hum blebeliever); I desire nothing in all the world so much. I believe the testimony which God gives of his Son. I judge the Lord, who hath promised life through him, to be faithful; and I would gladly receive Christ, with my whole heart." "Receive him then, (saith God) he is thine; he that hath the Son hath life, and shall never come into condemnation."

It is thus that guilt is discharged from the conscience, and the peace of God is obtained. It is

thus that the mind is relieved from the oppressive burden of sin. For, as St. Paul argues, Heb. ix. 13. "If the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ purge (cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!"

The perfect efficacy of this blood is frequently expressed in Scripture in very strong terms: "I have blotted out (saith God) thy sins as a thick cloud."—"Though your sins were as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;"—"Yea, (saith the penitent Psalmist) wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow:" and again,—"as far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "This is he that came by *blood*."

But our text further says, "This is he that came by water also." Some understand this to signify *Baptism;* but this does not agree so well with the scope of the whole passage; but we shall consider it, as proposed in the beginning of this discourse, as signifying a second blessed effect of the death of Christ,—the Sanctification of believers, in virtue of that death. This is the second part of our discourse,

We should study to know the full and complete design of the death of Christ. The apostle John, in our text, seems to be anxious that we should do so. It is, indeed, the weakness of our nature, frequently to regard one part of a subject and neglect the other; and is too often unhappily so in the subject before us. If we should consider Christ as coming into the world by *water* only;—that is, only to purify us to himself, although this is a very great and glorious design of his death, and an essential branch of his great salvation, yet it is not the whole. And if, on the other hand, we should acknowledge in the death of Christ no other design than to make an atonement for sin, and thereby save

us from wrath, we should neglect another and an equally important object of the Saviour's sufferings. And there is reason to fear that some well-disposed persons have fallen into this error. There has been, by the grace of God, a very distinguishing revival, of late years, of the great and fundamental truth of the Protestant religion,—Justification through faith in the blood of Christ; but, as men are ever prone to extremes, some have, in their zeal for this doctrine, neglected, if not denied, the twin-doctrine, if so I may call it, of Sanctification by the Spirit of Christ; which is as if they would say, This is he that came by *blood* only, and not both by water and blood. Let us not then separate what God hath so closely connected, but let us be concerned to derive from the meritorious death of our Redeemer, *both* these invaluable blessings,—Justification, of which we have already spoken, and Purification, or Sanctification, of which we now proceed to speak.

The necessity, the absolute necessity of inward purification arises from that pollution and defilement of our nature, which have been already mentioned; and it would by no means be sufficient for our final happiness, that merely the guilt of sin should be removed, and punishment remitted;—it is equally necessary that "the heart should be purified;" and that we "should be renewed in the spirit of our minds." And that this was the design of our Redeemer's death, appears from the declaration of St. Paul (Titus ii. 14.); where, speaking of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, he says,—"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;"—and in another place (Eph. ii. 28, &c.) where he strongly affirms that "by grace we are saved, through faith, and not of works, lest any man should boast," he adds, according to the spirit of our text, and, as it were, uniting "the water with the blood,"—"For we are his workmanship, cre-

ated in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And, as both these blessings were united in the design of our Saviour when he laid down his life for us, so they are united in the desires and prayers of every sincere penitent. Observe the case of the royal penitent, Psalm li. He begins his prayer by a petition for "mercy," and that God would "blot out his transgressions;" and he afterwards cries as earnestly, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!"

This cleansing implies more than amendment of life and reformation of manners; for this is possible, even where the love of sin is retained in the heart, and speculative iniquity habitually indulged. It is also far more than Baptism, which is but the "outward visible sign of that inward grace" of sanctification, of which we speak. Our Lord, indeed, insists upon being born of water and of the Spirit, which some interpret of Baptism. But, that our Lord did not intend Baptism by that expression, seems to be plain; for Baptism was not then instituted when he made this declaration to Nicodemus: our Lord then declared, with the most awful solemnity, that, "except a man be born again, he could not see the kingdom of Heaven;" but if Baptism were meant, it would then follow that no unbaptised person could, on any account, be saved; —which, we trust, few would venture to assert. It is also implied in our Lord's words, That whosoever is born again shall be saved;—but who will dare to affirm that every baptised person shall be saved?

It is, indeed, true that Baptism is a type, or emblem of regeneration; and, as a divine ordinance, representative of spiritual purification, Christ may be said to "come by water;" in the same manner as in the wine used in the Lord's Supper, and representative of his death, he may be said to "come by blood;" yet these are by no means the chief things intended; they are but "the shadow,—the body is Christ."

The Sanctification for which we plead is a supernatural principle, or habit of grace implanted and preserved by the Spirit of God in the hearts of believers, whereby they are enabled to live unto God, and perform that obedience to him, which he requires and accepts through Jesus Christ.

This purification is, by the Mediation of Christ, *meritoriously*,—by faith in Christ, *instrumentally*,—and by the agency of the Holy Spirit, *efficaciously*.

(1.) It is by the mediation of Christ, *meritoriously*. We owe to Jesus Christ the renovation of our nature in the image of God; for he died to "bring us to God;"—to "redeem us to God;"—"he gave himself for the Church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word: that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. v. 25.

(2.) It is through faith in Christ, *instrumentally*. Believers only are the subjects of sanctification. "Sanctify them through thy truth," said our Lord, in his prayer for his disciples, "thy word is truth:" and again he said, "Ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is by a view of Christ, and of the cross of Christ, that the world is crucified unto us,—that it loses all its bewitching charms, and that "we are crucified to the world," so that they gladly separate themselves from us. It was thus that the primitive Christians "purified their souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit." 1 Pet. i. 22.) It was thus that the idolatrous and vicious heathens "purified their hearts through faith." (Acts xv. 9.)

(3.) But it is *efficiently*, by the Holy Spirit, that believers are sanctified. This is his special work, and he is called *The Holy Spirit*, not merely because he is holy in his own Divine nature, neces-

sarily so, but because he is the author of all the holiness that is to be found in the world; all springs from him as light from the sun; and it is, therefore, called (1 Pet. i. 22.) "Sanctification of the Spirit:" in connexion with "belief of the truth."

(4.) The sanctification of believers is promoted by *the means of grace*, as religious ordinances of divine appointment are properly called. Faith itself usually "cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God." This is the "sincere milk of the word," by which believers grow and thrive; and this renders the knowledge of Christ, by the Gospel, so admirably useful, that all Christians may, with holy Paul, "account all things but loss," for the sake of its acquisition.

The Lord's Supper is one of the most eminent among the means of grace and instruments of sanctification; it not only maintains the remembrance of Christ crucified,—but it is calculated to excite hatred to sin, love to the Saviour, and brotherly affection to fellow-christians, while it gives occasion for the renewal of our vows and engagements to be the Lord's.

Prayer is, in a high degree, a sanctifying exercise. Every grace is employed in it, and strengthened by it. Our knowledge, our humility, our faith, our hope, our love to God and man, all are employed, and, by exercise, increased, in this holy duty. It was said of old, no less truly than proverbially, "Praying will make a man leave off sinning, or sinning will make him leave off praying."

Praising God, by singing psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, not only "makes melody in the ears of God," but it is highly beneficial to man; it exalts his conceptions of his glorious Benefactor, reminds him of his obligations, excites his gratitude, and enforces his obedience.

(5.) To these we may add, the various afflictions with which God, in his holy providence, visits his

people, These, indeed are, for the present, "not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards, they work together for good, and produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness," They remind us of the evil of sin, and embitter it to us; they lessen our valuation of earthly things; they wean us from the world, and diminish our dependance on creatures; they blunt the edge of worldly affections, and teach us to stretch our wings, and soar towards the happy world in which afflictions are known no more.

"Thus may we sing:—O happy rod,
That brought us nearer to our God?"

## CONCLUSION.

1. Let us reflect, with becoming humility, on natural defilement.

Was it necessary that the Son of God should suffer, and bleed, and die! Is it necessary that the Holy Spirit should exert his divine energy? and is it necessary that Ordinances and Providences should all concur in our purification? How deep then must have been the defilement of our nature! Is all this necessary to make us clean? how humbly then should we walk with our God! that, as it is written (Ezek. xvi. 63.) "We may remember, and be confounded, and never open our mouth any more, because of our shame, although the Lord be pacified towards us for all that we have done."

2. And if we are by nature thus defiled, how necessary is it that we should be cleansed! If Jesus do not wash us in his precious blood, and renew us by his Holy Spirit, we can have no part with him, either in this world or in that which is to come. Look then to Jesus, for this double cure of sin: seek the efficacy both of the water and the blood; and let no one dare to separate what God hath joined. Both are equally necessary; and if we have not both, we have neither. Justification and Sanctification, though distinct in their nature,—the former respecting our

*state*, and the latter our *disposition*, are equally necessary and essential to our salvation; and both are the free gifts of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But seek Justification first; and do not suppose you must first be sanctified, in order to recommend you to God, and induce him to show you mercy; but first of all come to God, as a guilty sinner; for pardon, through the blood of Christ; and then cry to him to be sanctified, as a helpless believer, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

3. Let believers in Christ, already sanctified in part, still look to Jesus for further supplies of grace. Our Lord has pronounced a blessing on those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness;" and he has added a gracious promise to such persons—"they shall be filled." We are apt to sit down with ordinary attainments, and content ourselves if we are like others. But we should press forward towards perfection, and earnestly desire a more complete conformity to Christ, our great example; that "as he was, we also may be in this world." (1 John iv. 17.) And let us pray for ourselves, as St. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians: (1 Thess. v. 23.) "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ:" and may we pray in faith, believing the promise added,—"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Amen.

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!
Let the water and the blood
From thy riven side which flow'd,
Be of sin the double cure!
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r!"

*Jesus Christ, the Object of Faith, of Love, and of Joy.*

# SERMON XCVII.

1 PETER, I. 8.

*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

IT is a great thing to be a Christian. So thought the Apostles; who, writing to the Churches, always congratulate them on their having become Christians, and on the privileges to which, as such, they were entitled. "Blessed be God," said holy Peter, "who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!" and having mentioned their faith and hope in him, commends these graces the more, because they had not enjoyed, as many others had, the advantage of seeing Christ in the flesh; for they did not dwell in Judea, but in various distant countries; yet, though they never saw his person, they loved him, and rejoiced in him, having first believed in him, to the saving of their souls.

That which was the character of these primitive believers is also the character of all true Christians,

in every place, and in every age of the world. I shall therefore proceed to shew, that

*Jesus Christ, though at present invisible, is the Object of the Christian's Faith, and Love, and Joy.*

1. *Jesus Christ, though at present unseen, is the Object of the Christian's Faith.*

We must take *Faith* as the first in order; for the Apostle accounts for their loving him, and for their rejoicing in him, by their having first believed in him.

Jesus Christ is now unseen by us. He was once seen upon earth; and seen by very different eyes: by some he was seen with delight; others beheld him with indifference or contempt,—they "saw no beauty in him wherefore they should desire him;" yea, "they turned away their faces from him," with hatred and disgust. A happy few, however, "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Yea, so enamoured with the sight was the pious and aged prophet Simeon, that when once he had clasped the holy infant Jesus in his arms, he wished to see no other object, but exclaimed, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have beheld thy salvation."

To have seen Christ in the flesh, some have thought, would have been the highest of all gratifications; but the sight would have both its advantages and disadvantages. Doubtless, there was something inexpressibly charming in his public discourses and private instructions. Grace was poured into his lips; his hearers wondered at the gracious words which dropped from them; and even his adversaries admitted that never man spake like him. Doubtless there must have been something surprizingly grand and affecting in the performance of his miracles. How must the spec-

tators have been affected when they saw him cast out demons, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, a tongue to the dumb, and life to a dead corpse! How striking, how convincing, how astonishing must have been these spectacles!

And yet many of those who saw Christ in the flesh, laboured under some disadvantages too. The poverty and the occupation of his supposed father; his own poverty; with the poverty and meanness of his chosen associates—the apostles; the general contempt of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the priests and the rulers; with the ill names, and suspicions, and base imputations under which he lay, proved a dangerous stumbling block to many. Above all, when he had been betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, and forsaken by all,—when he had been apprehended and bound like a felon, arraigned at the bar, accused of blasphemy and rebellion, condemned, scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and actually crucified as a malefactor, dead and buried,—how did the hearts, even of his friends, sink and fail them! and they could only sigh, and say, "We trusted that this would have proved he who was to redeem Israel; but now our hopes are buried in his grave!" Such were the prejudices of some, and the fears of others, who beheld him on earth.

But Faith is a thing totally distinct from sight, or the evidence of any of our senses. Believing is giving credit to a report, or testimony, or promise, concerning what we have *not* seen; "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things *not seen*." Heb. xi. 1. Hence it was, that when Christ reproved Thomas, who would not believe the testimony of credible witnesses concerning his resurrection till he had personally seen him, he said, "Thomas,—because thou hast *seen* me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed!" Perhaps Peter, in our text, alludes to that saying of Christ. The per-

sons to whom he wrote this epistle were "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia;" consequently they could not have seen Jesus in the flesh, who confined his travels to the Holy Land, and his ministry to the children of Israel; he there commends their faith, for they had believed in him, without seeing him. In like manner, *we* must believe in him; we must believe on the testimony of God in the Gospel. "There are three that bear record (or give testimony) in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost;" and this is the substance of the Divine testimony,—that "God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." 1 John, v. 7, 11. Now this testimony is received, and credited as divinely true; and thus, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." John iii. 33. He believes that eternal life may be obtained, even by miserable sinners, through the atonement of the Son of God; and he believes the promise, that whosoever cometh to God, by him, shall be accepted; and therefore indulges a humble hope and expectation that he shall be "saved from wrath," and "reign in life by Jesus Christ." With this blessed hope in Jesus, will he not be sensible of his obligations to the Saviour? Will he not say,—"Yea, he is altogether lovely! this is my beloved, and this is my friend!" Yes; this is the genuine language of every believer. And this leads us to the second head of our discourse, which is, that

II. *Jesus Christ is the object of the Christian's Love.*

The Apostle notices it, in our text as a thing somewhat remarkable, that a person *unseen* should thus be loved; for, among mortals, and in the usual course of human affairs, love is excited, or promoted, by a sight of its object. To *love* an unseen person is, therefore, more remarkable than to *believe*

in a person unseen; for faith supposes the absence of the thing, or person, concerning whom the testimony is made. But Jesus Christ, of whom we speak, is beloved, though absent, on the testimony of the Holy Spirit, in and by the word; by which word, he is "evidently set forth, crucified among us:" (as the Apostle speaks to the believing Galatians) he is *exhibited*, not before the eyes of our bodies, but those of our mind. He is "set forth," by God himself, as "a propitiation for our sins."

Few, comparatively, of those who saw our Lord upon earth, loved him, or duly estimated his amiable character. A few, however, there were, who, like the family of Lazarus and his pious sisters, thought it their honour to receive him into their houses; while some pious women also ministered to him of their substance; and others, having had "much forgiven them, loved him much." And O! could the great number who had been blind, and deaf, and dumb, and paralytic, and feverish, and dropsical, and possessed, and who had received from his hands a sudden, perfect, and gratuitous cure, have surrounded him at the same moment, how would they jointly have testified their gratitude and their love! Some few tender-hearted persons sympathized with him under his sufferings, and smote their breasts, in agonies of grief and sorrow;—but, alas! the greater part of the Jewish people "despised and hated him, and cast him out of the vineyard." Unhappy nation! their posterity approve their sayings; for the modern Jews reject and hate him to this day.

Nevertheless, it is the universal, the never-failing character of genuine Christians,—that "they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and an inspired apostle scrupled not to say,—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." And is it not with very good reason that believers love him? Can they not give as good a reason for their love to him, as for their hope in him? Let us recall to mind—

The Divine Perfections that he possesses, blended with all the mild and gentle properties of humanity, in its most perfect state. He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person;" and "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is "the Almighty;" "all power in Heaven and Earth" is in his hands; he is "Head over all things;" "principalities and powers are all subjected to him." He possesses infinite wisdom,—"all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The whole creation is the work of his hands, and every part of it exhibits to our admiring eyes wonders of skill and contrivance, which bespeak the infinite understanding of their Maker. Behold also his unspotted purity and holiness: "He knew no sin; there was none in his nature; none in his practice. His keen-eyed enemies could find no blemish in his character; for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Behold his goodness; he was all goodness,—goodness incarnate. "He went about doing good;" it was his object, his business, his delight, his constant employment. What kindness did he show to the poor and needy! the sick and sorrowful! He was touched with the feeling of human infirmities; and none ever applied to him for relief and were rejected. We admire and praise the charitable man, who feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked, and supplies the poor; but who, of all the sons of men, ever denied himself, as did the Lord of all? Rich he was, eternally and infinitely rich; but for our sakes he became poor,—a man so poor, that he had not a place where to lay his head; and this for the purpose of raising us from the dunghill, and setting us among princes. Admire his matchless condescension, who left the bright abodes of bliss, and humbled himself to become a man, and dwelt for more than thirty years in this moral dungeon,—this sink of sin and pollution, where he "endured the contradiction of sinners against him-

self;" and where he must have been daily shocked, far more than was righteous Lot in Sodom, with the filthy deeds of the wicked; with the ignorance, the profaneness, the hypocrisy, and the hardness of heart of the Jews in that day.

Think of his ministerial labours; his travels on foot from village to village, and from town to town; exerting himself to be heard by congregations of many thousands at the temple, the sea-side, and on the mountains; and then exposed at midnight to the chilling air, while engaged in devotional exercises.

Above all,—follow him from the guest-chamber, where he kept the last passover with his disciples, instituted the sacramental supper, and poured forth the friendship of his heart in affectionate advice and fervent prayer;—follow him to the lonely garden, often the scene of his sacred retirement; and behold him prostrate on the cold ground, enduring an agony of soul which no words can describe, which no heart can fully conceive; and which forced from his suffering soul, (long used to sorrow and grief, but not to complaint), the mysterious cry,—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"

While yet covered with the blood pressed from every pore, by the insufferable agony of his spirit, behold him surrounded by a band of ruffians, headed by the traitor, one of his own family,—seized, bound, hurried to the unjust tribunal, crowned with thorns, severely scourged, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, barbarously insulted, and, at length, nailed to the cross, lifted up, and for hours suspended by his wounded hands,—a spectacle to angels and to men! Behold, how he loved us!

"O for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break!
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak!"

But this is not all. Behold "the Lamb in the midst of the throne!" Highly exalted as he is,—

"King of kings, and Lord of lords," he has taken a man's heart with him to Heaven; he is still the brother of our nature, "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone!"

"And in his measure feels afresh
What every member bears."

And now stop, and think; and say,—Is he not a proper object of your love! Does he not deserve your highest esteem, your most cordial affection? Is he not "altogether lovely?" Yes; and let us join the beloved disciple, and say with him, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

We now proceed to the last head of our discourse, and say, that

*Jesus Christ is the object of a believer's joy*,—"in whom ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Joy is a passion produced by love; it is the triumph of pleasure in the possession, or in the anticipation, of some promised good. This joy arises both from a salvation already in part received, and a salvation ready to be revealed, and to be perfectly possessed hereafter.

What excites the passion of joy among the *children* of men? Inquire; and you will find something like it, but much superior to it, in the salvation of which we speak.

A man is just delivered from extreme and imminent danger. The ship in which he sailed was wrecked, and driven to pieces on the shore; but he escaped the threatening destruction, and is landed in safety, beyond the reach of harm. Another was asleep in his house, which was all in flames. He is alarmed; death, in the most horrible form, threat-

ens him with instant ruin; but happily he reaches a window, and safely descends into the street. He is saved. O what joy possesses his soul!

A criminal is arraigned, and charged with a capital offence. The witnesses give evidence against him. He trembles for the result. The jury retire to consider their verdict. They return to deliver it. All is attention; every eye is fixed on the foreman; and no eye so anxious as that of the prisoner. The welcome sound,—"Not guilty," salutes his ear.—Ah! who can describe his joy!

Another prisoner is declared to be guilty. He is shut up in his lonely cell; the death warrant is signed, and the fatal morning approaches. It is come. The officers of justice arrive; and the dreadful sentence is about to be executed. But, just at the awful moment, an unexpected buz is heard; the agitation increases; and lo! "a pardon! a pardon!" is announced.—Ah! who can conceive of the prisoner's joy.

A wretched captive is taken in war, or seized by lawless pirates. He is shut up in a loathsome dungeon where, for many a long year, he drags on a tiresome existence. He scarcely dares to hope for deliverance. But through the kind providence of God, some friendly heart has found means to procure his ransom. It is paid, and the captive is set free. Ah! who can tell what are his grateful and joyful feelings!

Or, to recur to a case more common and familiar. Let us state it in the words of inspiration:—"Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted; their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble; and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction." How great is their joy on the return of ease, and health, and appetite, and strength, and pleasure!

These are the joys of men, even of "men of the world, whose portion is in this life." Far greater, surely are the joys of the redeemed. They are delivered from going down to the pit: they are as brands plucked out of the fire; they are justified, freely and fully, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness unto them:—and blessed indeed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered! and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity! Jesus Christ has preached deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who were bound. The great Physician has healed all their diseases, and soon will he introduce them into that healthier clime, where no inhabitant shall say, I am sick.

> "These are the joys that satisfy
> And sanctify the mind."

These are the joys which are called "unspeakable and full of glory." No words can describe them; no language can express them; they are too great, too glorious to admit of description; they are infinite, because they are eternal. Therefore are they "full of glory."—They relate to the future and everlasting state of complete purity, exaltation and bliss. Indeed "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" but it is our joy to know that we shall be near and like our Saviour.

## CONCLUSION.

We have been contemplating a summary of real Christianity; including Faith, and Hope, and Joy. In these, unquestionably, true and genuine religion consist; and if so, it becomes every one to inquire,—Have I this *Faith?* Have I this *Hope?* Have I this *Joy?* Jesus it is true, is yet unseen; but the true Christian may say "I rely upon him alone for

salvation. I do not see him; but in my esteem he is altogether lovely. He is my beloved, and he is my friend. I do not see him, but I rejoice in him; and God forbid that I should glory in any thing but him!" Thrice happy is the man who thus can, sincerely, speak.

What has been said may serve to recommend religion, and counteract the prejudices of a carnal world. They tell us that religion is, at best, but a gloomy business, and strongly tends, if deeply imbibed, to destroy the pleasures of life, and lead to melancholy. But how can this be, when I find that "the kingdom of Heaven," into which I wish to press, is "Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost?"—when I learn, from this text, that the Christian is one who believes, and loves, and rejoices? I will believe the Scriptures, and the people of God, and my own experience. I will not believe the world.

The world has its joys,—such as they are. I envy them not: they are polluted; they are transient; they end in sorrow. But the joys of religion are substantial and permanent; they are such as were promised by the prophet Isaiah, when he foretold the blessings of the Messiah's reign, Isa. xii. 1—4, "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

And may I not reason thus? If an *unseen Saviour* be thus an object and source of unutterable joy, what will that Saviour be when he shall be seen! He will not always be unseen. Even now, by Faith we see; but it is "through a glass, darkly." We can see the Sun of Righteousness only as we see the natural sun when we observe an eclipse, through

a coloured and darkened medium: our present views of Christ are weak, and transient, and partial, and imperfect; but hereafter, when delivered from the burden of the flesh, they shall be real, substantial, immediate, direct. We could not now endure such a flood of light and glory as overwhelmed the disciples or Tabor, on John in Patmos; but our spirits, shall be strengthened, and freed from all the clouds that obscure them; and our mortal bodies too, having put on immortality, shall clearly behold "the Lamb in the midst of the throne:" and then shall be fulfilled the saying that is written:—"As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Amen and amen.

## HYMN.

Mine inward joys, suppress'd too long,
Extatic, burst into a song;
From Christ, tho' now unseen, they rise
And reach his throne beyond the skies.

His glories strike the wond'ring sight
Of all the first-born sons of light;
Beyond the Seraphim they shine,
Unrivall'd all, and all divine.

Yet mortal worms his friendship boast,
And make his saving name their trust.
Jesus, my Lord, I know him well;
He rescued me from Death and Hell.

This sinful heart from God estrang'd
His new-creating pow'r hath chang'd;
And, mingling with each secret thought,
Maintains the work which first it wrought.

He gives to see his Father's face;
He gives my soul to thrive in grace;
And brings the views of glory down,
The beamings of my heav'nly crown.

Thus entertain'd, while here below
Unspeakable my transports grow;
New joys in swift succession roll,
And glory fills my silent soul! DODDRIDGE.

# SERMON XCVIII.

JEREMIAH, XLIV. 4.

*Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate.*

THIS is part of a message sent from Jehovah, by his servant the prophet Jeremiah, to a party of the Jews who retired to Egypt, when their brethren of Judah were led captive to Babylon. God here reminds them of the reproofs he had given their nation, and of the punishments he had inflicted for its sins.—"I sent unto you (saith he) all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them;" and the substance of his messages by them was, "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

"The abominable thing" here referred to was, doubtless, their idolatry; they had "provoked him to anger, by burning incense to other gods," and by "pouring out drink-offerings to the queen of heaven." (verses 8, 17, &c.) This sin was peculiarly hateful to God, for it robbed him of his glory as the only proper object of his worship; it was a breach of his most positive commandments; and it was exceedingly criminal in *them*, for they were favoured above all nations with the knowledge of his

nature and will; they were his appointed "witnesses," to testify to the world the unity of God; and this breach of their trust led them into undue connexions with the heathen world, from which he had separated them, and induced them to commit many atrocious crimes inseparable from the worship of idols. And their history shows how God resented this their conduct. Neighbouring nations were let loose upon them for their punishment; and sometimes they were carried captive by their enemies; the ten tribes, who were the most idolatrous, were irrecoverably dispersed; and Judah herself was now captive in Babylon. God, therefore, here exhorts them, by his servant Jeremiah, to abstain from this provoking practice. "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

But though this charge related originally to the idolatry of Judah, it is properly applicable to sin in general, and to every sin in particular;—and, O that every one of us may consider the text as a message from God to himself, and particularly with relation to any "easy besetting sin," of which he is conscious. And with this view, let us notice three things contained in the words:

I. Sin is an abominable thing.

II. God hates it.

III. He requires us to avoid it. "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

I. With regard to the real nature and evil of sin. We must form our opinion of it, not from the world, but from God. If we consult the world, in which "sin abounds," we shall find that "fools make a mock at it:" they treat it as a trifle, which need not give them any uneasiness: there are some who are properly "workers of iniquity;"—it is their trade, yea, their food, their element, their delight; they "cannot cease from sin:" and some go further still:

they plead for it; they promote it in others, and "glory in their shame."

But, whatever mistaken men, who are deceived and enslaved by the Destroyer, may think of sin, we are sure that our holy God, who cannot be deceived, and will not deceive us, accounts it an abominable thing, and hates it with a perfect hatred. And how can it be otherwise? for it is exactly the reverse of all that he is, all that he approves, and all that he requires. He gave us our being; he gave us all the powers of body and mind which we possess. He gave us this earth on which we dwell; and he has filled it with his goodness. "He gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness." And all that he requires, and most reasonably requires, by way of return, is that we love him supremely, and that we love our neighbour as we wish he should love us. And is not this most reasonable? Who can object to such a demand? But *does* man thus love his God, or his neighbour? Ah! no. The contrary is the fact. The hearts of men are by nature alienated from God, and their carnal minds are enmity against him. This will appear if you take a glance at the holy law, as it is summarily contained in the Ten Commandments.

The first commandment requires us to know and acknowledge Jehovah to be the only living and true God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. But alas! how have vain men formed, in their corrupt imagination, "lords many, and gods many!" they have multiplied deities, male and female, to the number of many thousands! and thus they have given that glory to idols which is due to him alone!

The second commandment forbids the worship of God by images: but how fruitful have been the corrupt imaginations of men, in "changing the incorruptible glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things!"—offences so hateful

to God, that he gave up these idolaters to the basest "lusts of their own hearts." Rom. i.

How abominable to God is the profane, or even trifling, use of his most holy name!—a crime which, though overlooked by men and magistrates, is such, that the Majesty of Heaven, so affronted, will not hold the offender guiltless, but will punish him as his iniquity deserves.

God, in mercy to mankind, has appointed one day in seven to be sacred to religion and to rest. But ungrateful man refuses this heavenly boon; and while he robs God of his glory, in refusing obedience and worship, robs himself of the inestimable benefits he might enjoy.

God notices and hates the undutifulness and disobedience of children to their parents, while he gives a gracious promise to those who honour their father and mother.

How provoking to the Father of mercies is the crime of murder! When the first murder was committed, "thy brother's blood (said God unto Cain) crieth to me from the earth;" it cried for vengeance; and the decision of justice is, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

God has marked with peculiar infamy the sins of adultery and fornication; they are stamped with the name of "uncleanness," as being in a peculiar manner contrary to that holiness which he requires of his creatures;—and let such offenders tremble when they read that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Heb. xiii. 4. Yea, so infamous are these vices in his sight, that they must not even be named among saints. Eph. v. 4, 5.

Dishonesty, in all its forms, is offensive to the God of truth and equity. Not only open thieves, as housebreakers and highwaymen, are obnoxious to him, but all injustice between buyers and sellers; frauds committed in the price, weight, and measure of goods; all the arts of deception practised in trade; the dishonesty and negligence of servants, the

contracting of debts without the prospect of payment;—in short, every transaction between man and man, contrary to that golden rule of action, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even that to them."

Perjury is a sin of dreadful magnitude. Woe be to the man that feareth not an oath, or dare appeal to God for a lie: and all slander, malice, and wanton injury of the character of others, is an abomination in his view.

Covetousness he deems idolatry; for the (inordinate) love of money is the root of all evil; and as it is a secret sin, a sin of the heart, to which God alone may be witness,—it is an evil which, above all others, detects the true nature of sin. St. Paul says of himself, "he had not known lust (concupiscence, or sinful desire) unless the law had said 'Thou shalt not covet.'" Rom. vii. 7.

Thus have we seen, by a glance at the Ten Commandments, that sin is an abominable thing: the law proves it to be such, and his holy word calls it by names intended to express *his* abhorrence of it; and to excite *ours*,—it is "filthiness," "poison," and the "vomit of a dog."

It is almost needless to prove, as we proposed, in the second place, that

GOD HATES SIN. "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate;" for, had he not hated it, he would not have prohibited it in his law, upon pain of death.

It must needs be hateful to him, for it has spoiled his work, especially the master-piece of his work upon earth, his creature Man, originally formed in his own holy image. Ah, how is that image defaced! how is that glorious creature degraded! Where now is his image? It is lost, it is gone; and the sinner, given up to the base lusts of his mind and his body, bears the horrible likeness of the Devil and the brute combined; his

wicked tempers resembling the former; his sordid appetites resembling the latter.

God's holy word is full of expressions of his just resentment:—"God is angry with the wicked every day."—"The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

Hence also the dreadful threatenings which we find in his word: "The wages of sin is death:" "The wicked shall be turned into Hell:"—"Say ye to the wicked, It shall be ill with him; for he shall eat of the fruit of his ways:"—"He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

And as the threatenings of God, in his word, denote his anger, so his proceedings in the world discover it too. What induced him to hurl from their high abodes in bliss, the myriads of angelic spirits, now enchained in darkness? Doubtless it was their hateful sin against him. And what led him to expel from the Garden of Happiness the man whom he placed there to dress and to keep it? We know that it was his sinful disobedience. For the same cause, he who made the earth, "cursed it for man's sake;" doomed him to severe toil, and the woman to painful travail. Hatred to sin "broke up all the fountains of the great deep, and opened all the windows (or floodgates) of heaven;" deluged the whole face of the earth, and drowned the human race. It was God's just hatred to sin that led him to "rain upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven:" to the same cause we owe all the dire diseases that invade the human frame, and render the earth one huge hospital: it is this that depopulates the globe thrice in a century, and fills the graves with unnumbered inhabitants; "for dust we are, and to the dust must we return." Nor is this all; there is a second death,—there is a dreadful Hell for the reception and punishment of the wicked, where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." To this horrible place He who hates

sin will consign all finally impenitent and unbelieving sinners; saying, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." And now, is any thing more necessary to prove that God hates sin? One greater proof yet remains; it is this—the great, holy, and just Jehovah saw fit, in the exercise of his mercy towards man, to punish sin in the person of his innocent Son; "for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God hath been pleased to perform in a different manner: "he has sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," even in the human nature of Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son; and this for his gracious purpose, "That the righteousness of God might be fulfilled *in* (or rather *for*) us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 3, 4.

We have shewn, 1, That sin is an abominable thing; and, 2, That God hates it: We now proceed to the last part of the subject, which is,

Thirdly, *God calls upon us to avoid sin.* "Oh! do not this abominable thing which I hate."

This, you see, was the substance of all his messages to Israel by the prophets:—"rising early, and sending them," alluding to the practice of men, who having business of great importance to transact, rise early to set about it, that no time may be lost; so God, earnest to prevent the destruction of men by their sins, sent his servants betimes to give them warning.

This is the language of the Ten Commandments; most of which, it is observable, are in the negative form, as do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness; and they are put in this form, because fallen man is disposed by nature to do that which is evil: he must, therefore, be warned against that evil to

which he is prone. "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate." Let us remember and treasure up in our minds the word of God for this very purpose: thus David did, "Thy word (says he) have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee:" and again, "How shall a young man cleanse his way?"—the answer is, "By taking heed thereunto, according to thy word:" and this proved successful; for he says again, "By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."

Observe also the heavenly discourse of our Saviour upon the Mount! What divine morality is inculcated in the inimitable sermon! What a spiritual exposition does the King of Zion give of his holy law, to deter men from sin, and cause them to resemble their Father who is in Heaven! In like manner the holy apostles, in their discourses and in the epistles, discourage very vice, and insist upon the sanctity of character which becomes Christians; saying, "Let every one who nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

The histories contained in the word of God have the same holy tendency. Do we read the histories of good men? "Let us be followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Do we peruse the histories of bad men, and of their sore punishments?—"these things are written for our warning,"—these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. x. 6—11.

The threatenings which we find in the word of God have the same benevolent intention. "Son of man (said God to the prophet Ezekiel) I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me: when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity;—but his blood will I require at thy hand."

Ezek. iii. 17. The language of all the threatenings is,—"Do not this abominable thing." "Turn ye turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

And do not all the various blessings we receive from the hand of God come to us with the same message? Does he not do us good, giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness? does not he visit the earth, and water it? clothe the pastures with flocks? cover the valleys with corn, and crown the year with his goodness? and doth not this goodness cry with a gentle yet powerful voice,—"Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate?" And surely, if we will not hear that admonition, we shall hear him justly complain, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider!"

And further, What is the language of affliction? What mean the numerous trials and troubles of life? Are they not all the fruits of sin? do they not painfully convince us that sin is an evil and a bitter thing? And are they not intended for our profit, to produce "the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and to make us partakers of his holiness?" Yes, every pain of body, and every pang of mind, says, —"Do not this abominable thing that I hate!"

In a word, Such is the uniform language of the whole gospel of Christ. Is not this the doctrine of the Cross? Why did the innocent Son of God suffer, and bleed, and die? He did no sin, "neither was guile found in his mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all." In this way the all-wise God was pleased to exhibit to the whole world his just abhorrence of sin, by punishing it in the person of his Son, while he displays the riches of his grace

in freely pardoning all who believe in him. Thus also he would furnish his people with the strongest possible motives to holiness, that they might hate the sin which murdered their Lord; and be constrained by the force of love to him, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to live unto him in holiness and righteousness of life all their days.

## CONCLUSION.

And is sin such an abominable thing?—then "how abominable and filthy is man, that drinketh in iniquity like water?" (Job, xv. 16.)—who longs for it as the parched traveller for the refreshing stream, and to whom it is as delightful as cold water to a thirsty soul; for there are those (are we of that number?) who "commit iniquity with greediness; who take pleasure in unrighteousness; and who cannot cease from sin." Ah! how unlike are such men to God! and if only "the pure in heart shall see God," where shall these lovers and workers of iniquity appear? Marvel not, then, if to such we address the solemn words of Christ,—"Ye must be born again."—"Verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John, iii. 3, &c.)

This also shows how great and dangerous a mistake it is, to think lightly of sin, or to esteem it a trifle; or to do as (the Scripture says) "*fools* do,—make a mock at sin." Ah! it is no trifle, unless the anger of an offended and Almighty God be a trifle, and unless everlasting punishment be a trifle. O let us learn to think and speak of sin as *He* does who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.

It will follow, then, that if sin be so abominable in the sight of God, and if he so hate it, that we also should hate it. So did Job, when his singular afflictions and instructions had accomplished their designed purpose; then did he exclaim—"I abhor

myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" and thus will it ever be found that penitent and pardoned sinners will "remember their own evil ways, and their doings that were not good, and loathe themselves in their own sight, for their iniquities, and for their abominations." Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

And this should lead us greatly to admire the love of God to such unlovely creatures as sinners are. His love must, indeed, be free, perfectly free, for there could be nothing in us to excite it: there was enough to occasion his anger, and cause him to forsake us for ever; but while he beheld us in this low and loathsome state, "he passed by and beheld us, and said unto us, *live!*" "for the time was a time of love!" (Ezek. xvi. 6.) Amazing love it was that said, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

> "Let all the world fall down, and know
> That none but God such love could show."

Here, too, let us admire the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Let us, with St. Peter, call it "precious blood," for precious indeed that blood must be which can perfectly cleanse from such horrid pollution, and make the believing sinner, plunged in that fountain, "whiter than snow!" Nor less admirable is the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit, through whose renewing power we become new creatures; no longer "the slaves of sin," but rendered "the servants of righteousness;" being "made free from sin, we are become servants to God, having our fruit unto holiness, and expecting the blessed end—everlasting life."

How strong, then, are the obligations under which we are laid to "abhor that which is evil, and cleave unto that which is good!" to "hate every false way, and the garment spotted with the

flesh;" to avoid even the appearance of evil, and to abound in every good work, continually walking as under the eye of God, and as hearing him say to us—"Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

## PSALM LI.

Lord, I am vile, conceiv'd in sin,
And born unholy and unclean;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts the race, and taints us all.

My lips with shame my sins confess
Against thy law, against thy grace,
Great God, thy nature hath no bound;
So let thy pard'ning love be found.

Behold, I fall before thy face,
My only refuge is thy grace;
No outward forms can make me clean;
The leprosy lies deep within.

Jesus, my God, thy blood alone
Hath power sufficient to atone;
Thy blood can make me white as snow;
No Jewish types could cleanse me so.

O may thy love inspire my tongue!
Salvation shall be all my song;
And all my powers shall join to bless
The Lord, my strength and righteousness. WATTS.

# SERMON XCIX.

JOB, XI. 7.

*Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?*

THAT there is a God, is almost the universal belief of mankind. Perhaps there are few absolute Atheists. Our reason compels us to believe that every thing which we see had a maker—that it could not make itself; but who or what God is, has been the subject of numberless disputes among men. History tells us that one of the ancient heathen philosophers was asked by his prince,—"What is God?" He desired a day to think of it, before he gave an answer: that day passed; he then desired two days more: when the two days were passed, he desired four. The king then demanded to know what he meant by such repeated delays. He replied,—"Sire, the more I think of him, he appears to me still more unknown!" This was not a bad answer for a heathen; but we are not in his condition. God has made himself known to us by his word; yea, he has sent us his Son; and "he who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

In the passage from which our text is taken, Zophar, a friend of Job, is very severe upon him, as if he had pretended to a perfect knowledge of God,

and for which he reproves him. This charge, though not strictly true as to Job, implies a very great and instructive truth; namely, that

GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

We do not mean to say that we can have *no* conceptions of his nature; but no *adequate* conceptions: —not that we cannot "find him out" at all; but, as our text intimates, not "to perfection." When we say, therefore, that God is incomprehensible, we must not infer that we need not search after God, or despair of finding him if we do; for indeed, the right knowledge of God is the sum of religion. We are commanded to "seek the Lord—to seek him while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near." Isa. lv. 6. It is promised, that "we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Yea, it is the grand promise of the New Covenant —"They shall all know me, from the least unto the greatest; and all thy children shall be taught of God."

And yet, after all, it will be found true, that "God is incomprehensible;" and the plain reason of this is, God is infinite, and we are finite; his glorious excellences are without bounds; but our capacities are within narrow limits. A shell cannot contain the ocean; nor can the human mind comprehend the Almighty. And this will appear if you consider,—that,

1. We cannot perfectly understand his WORKS: though we see them with our eyes, and understand them in part, we cannot find them out to perfection. It is our duty to observe them, and study them. "The works of God are great; sought out by all them who have pleasure in them;" and we are directed to "magnify his works which we behold." They are intended to preach their Maker; and they so "declare his glory," that the heathen, who have

no other instructor, will be left without excuse, if they glorify him not as God. (Psalm xix. and Rom. i. 21, &c.) But though we may admire, we cannot comprehend his works. A little child may fancy he can touch the moon, or reach a star; but an adult person knows better, and is aware of their vast distance; so, if our minds are rightly informed, we shall perceive that the works of God are immensely great and glorious, as is finely expressed in the verse after our text:—"It is high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than Hell, what canst thou know?" Of many of God's works we know neither the nature nor the design. Who can tell the distance of the fixed stars, or who knows what is their use? Who can say for what purposes destructive animals and poisonous plants were formed? And where is the man who can explain the nature of the connexion between his own soul and his body? Surely, then, if the *works* of God are thus incomprehensible, their Maker must needs be so too.

II. The ways of God, in the course of his providence, are to us frequently unsearchable. Truly does the Psalmist exclaim,—"How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—"Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known!" Or, as it is expressed in another place, "Clouds and darkness are round about him." There is, frequently to our feeble minds, an obscurity in the Divine proceedings. The righteous are afflicted, while bad men prosper: the wicked govern, and the pious are oppressed: useful men are cut off by death, while cumberers of the ground grow old in sin. In all this God is righteous; but his proceedings are, at present, incomprehensible.

III. The WORD of God is not perfectly understood. Many parts of it, indeed, are perfectly plain. Every thing necessary to salvation is so easy, that

"he who runneth may read;" yet there certainly are other things "hard to be understood;"—"deep things of God;" "meat for strong men," as well as "milk for babes." There are, especially, prophecies yet unfulfilled, which to us are obscure, as probably those already accomplished were, formerly, to the Church of God in ancient times. The word of God is an ocean, a vast abyss; which, with our feeble line, we cannot fathom; it is, like its Divine Author, incomprehensible.

IV. But it is of God himself, in his glorious attributes, that we chiefly design to speak. Who by searching can find out God? who can fully conceive of his Divine Perfections?

Speak we of his *Eternity?* Who can comprehend it? How can we conceive of a Being, self-existent, independent, self-sufficient, who existed before a creature was made, who had no beginning—suffers no change—will have no end: one who was from all eternity—an eternity past; who will remain unchangeable through an eternity to come? We believe that men, that angels, that the world had a beginning, for God willed them to exist; every thing we are acquainted with, was made; but who can conceive of Self-Existence?

We ascribe to God infinite *Power,*—our text styles him "The Almighty;" but who can conceive of Power that hath no limits? We perceive that the power of creatures is confined within narrow bounds. The powers of man are extremely limited; in some qualifications he sees himself exceeded by surrounding animals; some have more strength, greater swiftness, keener scent than himself, though reason exalts him far above them, and enables him to avail himself of their superiority for his own pleasure or profit; but after all, he finds himself weak and feeble, and, compared with the Almighty, a helpless worm. For "who can utter all his mighty acts?" and when we have stretched our thoughts to the utmost, in the

contemplation of his greatness, we can only say with Job, (chap. xxvi. 14.) "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power, who can understand?"—Compared with the reality, all our conceptions of it are but as a few drops compared with the ocean, or a gentle whisper compared with a tremendous peal of thunder. How noble, how sublime are the scriptural descriptions of his omnipotence in the prophet Isaiah!—"Who hath measured the waters (of the ocean) in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" Behold, said Elihu to Job, "God is mighty,—he is mighty in strength and in wisdom;" and then he proceeds to produce various proofs of it in the dispensations of his providence. God himself then takes up the mighty theme, and refers to the marvellous work of Creation, and his dominion over it. The effect upon the mind of Job was wonderful, and he cries out,—"I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee! I have uttered what I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." Thus he confesses that the Power of God is incomprehensible.

Again. We believe that God is possessed of infinite Wisdom and Knowledge. He perfectly knows all things that ever passed in the world from the first day of creation; he knows all things that are now passing in all the countries of this globe, as well as in Heaven and in Hell too. He foreknows all things which shall hereafter come to pass, in all future generations, to the end of time. But here we are lost at once, and are obliged to cry with the prophet (Ps. cxxxix. 6.) when he had been considering the universal presence of God, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it." We are conscious of our own ignorance; every day convinces us that we know next to nothing.

Men of the greatest talents, who have studied books all their lives, and have attained far more knowledge than their plainer neighbours, will be the first to confess their ignorance, and allow that their knowledge is very contracted. Who then can conceive of a Being from whom nothing is hidden; who knows the hearts of men; who "knoweth our thoughts afar off; who is perfectly acquainted with all that we call accidental, or contingent, and which it is impossible for the wisest men to foresee? We must readily own that the wisdom of God is incomprehensible to us; we can only stand on the shore of this vast and immeasurable ocean, and exclaim with St. Paul, "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33.

We are constrained to speak in the same manner of the infinite HOLINESS, the infinite JUSTICE, and the infinite GOODNESS of God. All these are clearly revealed and beautifully displayed in the Gospel of our salvation; but who can comprehend them? Adoring angels, in their heavenly worship, veil their faces while they cry "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" We see no beings around us on earth, even of the most pious and good, who are perfectly holy: "there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not:" how then can we conceive of Him who never did evil, who is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works?" "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" We see no perfect justice in our world; the wicked often escape deserved punishment, and the pious are defrauded and oppressed; but God's throne is established in righteousness, and the Judge of all the earth always does right. The goodness of God is also unsearchable; the earth is full of his goodness; but who can comprehend it? God loved the world and gave us his Son; but who can say how much he loved us in bestow-

ing such a gift?—It was an *unspeakable* gift! And if we survey the wondrous Cross, and try to estimate the love that brought down the Saviour from his throne to the cradle; and carried him through all the labours, and sorrows, and sufferings of his residence below, and fixed him at last on the cursed tree, we may try our skill and endeavour to measure the dimensions of his love; we may with all saints, examine its breadth, and its length, and its depth, and its height; but we must admit that, after all, it surpasseth knowledge. Ephes. iii. 8. Such being the fact—the *Works*, the *Ways*, the *Word*, the *Perfections* of God, being all incomprehensible, what are the practical lessons of instruction which we ought to learn from this acknowledged truth? These we shall now proceed to consider:

1. *We should learn to be humble.* It was for this purpose that the words of our text were spoken to Job; and Job *was* humbled by the dispensations of God's providence, and especially by the display of his infinite greatness. At the conclusion of this book, we find this holy man thus expressing his contrite feelings: "I have heard of thee (he says to God) by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Before this great, glorious, incomprehensible Being, shall man be proud? No; rather let him say, "Lord, what is man that thou shouldest be mindful of him?" Shall man venture to boast of wisdom? Hear how he is reproved in this chapter, verse the 12th:—"Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt."—What do we know? Let a good man of ancient times answer. Prov. xxx. 2:—"Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy;" and let St. Paul reprove the boaster! (1 Cor. viii. 2.) "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

And this should make religious people modest in their inquiries, and in their decisions; let them not be too curious or too positive;—dogmatical or censorious. The men of Bethshemesh were punished for looking into the ark; and let us beware of being "wise above that which is written." "Secret things belong to God; but things revealed belong to us and our children."

2. We may infer from hence, how base a thing is idolatry, or image worship! Is the great God incomprehensible, and shall we dare to make a likeness of him and pay it homage! "Doth he measure the waters in the hollow of his hand? Doth he mete out the heavens with a span? Doth he weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Are all nations before him as a drop, as an atom, as nothing, as less than nothing, and vanity? To whom then will ye liken God, or to whom shall I be equal, saith the Lord?" O! how dishonourable to God, and how disgraceful to man, is it thus to change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and to creeping things! Rom. i. 23. Even Pythagoras, a heathen philosopher, forbade his disciples to make an image of God—and shall any who call themselves Christians do it? God forbid!

3. Is God incomprehensibly glorious? then how should we admire and adore him! What high and honourable thoughts should we entertain of him! Let us also worship him with reverence and godly fear, for he "will be sanctified in all those who approach him;" and let us imitate him who, though he was called by the familiar name of "the Friend of God," thus addressed the Majesty of Heaven:—"Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes!"

4. Let us calmly submit to all his dispensations in providence: they may sometimes seem to be

obscure, and even severe; but they are always wise, and holy, and good. He doeth all things well. We may not be able to discover the reasons of his dealings with us; as a child is unable to judge of his father's management of the family; as the subjects of a king may not always know the reasons of public measures, so we may be at a loss to conceive why the great and blessed God permits certain apparent evils to befall us; yet, let us bow to the sovereign disposal of Heaven, remembering that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter." If God himself be incomprehensible, is it any wonder that his proceedings should be so too? Our business is, not explanation or remonstrance, but submission: "Let the will of the Lord be done." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

5. Seeing that the nature of God is so wonderfully glorious, let us study to know him. We observed before, that his being incomprehensible is no reason why we should not labour to know him; if we cannot comprehend all his excellencies, (for they are infinite) yet let us attain what we can. To this most useful pursuit the word of God invites us; therein we are told, that "this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." Wise men do not decline the study of any science because of its sublimity or its difficulty. The astronomer applies himself to the study of the heavenly bodies, and labours to become acquainted with their magnitude, their distance, their revolutions, and, if possible, their uses; yet he does not expect to obtain a perfect and complete knowledge of them: and thus the physician, and the anatomist, and the botanist, pursue their several researches, while they yet remain far from being perfect in their acquaintance with the objects of their studies. But let all our notions of God be regulated by his own word; it is only in "his light that we shall see

light:" let us not presume to form our ideas of God by our own fancies, or the fancies of other men; we may sin by making *mental* as well as *material* images of God; as it was the fault with which God charged some of old—"they thought that God was altogether such as themselves;" but for this, he says, "I will reprove you." And let us beware of abusing those familiar emblems and illustrations of his Divine glory, which he condescends to give us: as where he is said to be vexed, to be grieved, to repent; these expressions are "after the manner of men," and intended to assist our feeble minds in their devout contemplations. In short, let us pray for Divine instruction, and seek the aid of the Spirit of Truth; while, with holy reverence, we search for God in his written word, which is "able to make us wise unto salvation. It is in the glass (the mirror) of the Gospel that we obtain the clearest and the mildest discoveries of God; there it is that "with open (unveiled) face, we behold his glory beaming in the face of his Son Jesus Christ;" for "he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person;" so that "he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also." (John xiv. 9.)

Further, we may learn from hence the reasonableness of Faith. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Now, "no man hath seen God at any time." He is "the invisible God;" but the Saviour "hath declared him;" he hath "manifested his name" to his people: what is revealed, therefore, let us receive by faith, and act accordingly. Thus "Moses endured, as seeing Him who is invisible;"—he had a clear and distinct view and apprehension of God, in his omnipresence, power, and faithfulness; and a fixed trust in him at all times, and on all occasions, as much as if he had seen God working with him and for him, with his bodily eyes:—thus also let us walk with God; and though we cannot comprehend him, let us admire, adore, love, and obey.

Finally, This view of the subject should render the heavenly state exceedingly desirable; for, in that state "we shall know, even as now we are known." At present we see through a glass darkly,"—obscurely, or, as in "a riddle—a parable, a dark saying:—but in that holy world of light, "face to face;" that is, clearly and fully. "Now, (said the highly-learned apostle of the Gentiles) now we know in part, and we prophecy (or preach) in part; but when that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away." We shall see the objects themselves, of which we have now but the shadows or the figures; the pure in heart shall see God—God in our nature—Immanuel, *God with us.* The expectation of Job, and of every other believer, shall be gratified.—"In my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself; and my eyes shall behold him, and not (as) a stranger." Job xix. 27.

Alas! what strangers are many to all these thoughts of God! they do not wish to know him; the language of their hearts, and of their practice is, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:"—but woe be to the sinner, if God should take him at his word; woe be to the man whom God forsakes: a time will come, when *his* favour shall appear to be infinitely more valuable than life itself; when life, deprived of his favour, shall be worse than death! O! sinner, if you possess one spark of reason; if you have the least degree of love to your own immortal soul, Seek the Lord while yet he may be found; call upon him, in prayer, for mercy and grace, for as yet he is near; and those who ask shall receive; those who seek shall find.

Now, to this glorious and gracious, though incomprehensible GOD; to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one great Supreme, be glory in all the churches, world without end! Amen.

## HYMN.

Can creatures to perfection find
Th' Eternal uncreated Mind?
Or can the largest stretch of thought
Measure and search his nature out?

'Tis high as heaven, 'tis deep as hell,
And what can mortals know or tell?
His glory spreads beyond the sky,
And all the shining worlds on high.

But man, vain man, would fain be wise,
Born like a wild young colt, he flies
Through all the follies of his mind,
And swells and snuffs the empty wind.

God is a king of pow'r unknown,
Firm as the orders of his throne;
If he resolve, who dare oppose,
Or ask him why, or what he does?

He wounds the heart, and he makes whole;
He calms the tempest of the soul;
When he shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the heavy bar?

He frowns, and darkness veils the moon;
The fainting sun grows dim at noon;
The pillars of heaven's starry roof
Tremble, and start at his reproof.

These are a portion of his ways;
But who shall dare describe his face?
Who can endure his light? or stand
To hear the thunder of his hand?

WATTS.

*The Great Harvest; or the End of the World.*

# SERMON C.

MATTHEW, XII. 39.

*The harvest is the end of the world.*

IT has pleased God to establish a striking analogy (or likeness) between worldly things and spiritual things. Perhaps it is impossible for us, in our present embodied state, rightly to conceive of them without such a medium.

"The world's a system of theology."

Our Lord, however, in his own ministry, often made use of the common objects of sense, as emblems of those spiritual blessings which he came into the world to bestow on mankind. In this chapter we have several parables!—The sower,—the tares,—the net,—the mustard-seed,—the leaven,—the hidden treasure,—the pearl of great price: all intended to represent the different effects of the Gospel on the different hearers of it; and the mixture of true believers and of false professors in the church, till the great day of judgment, which is here compared to the harvest.

* [It was the custom of our blessed Saviour to take occasion, from earthly things, to direct the minds of his people to heavenly things;—and we shall do well to imitate his example. Through his good providence we live to witness another Harvest. The season is returned in which the fields are stored with the foodful grain; when the husbandman feels himself rewarded for all his toil and expense; when the householder enjoys the prospect of an ample supply of bread for his family. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness! and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" But for that good providence the corn might have been destroyed in the blade, or blasted in the ear; legions of hostile insects might have devoured it, or a deluge of rain might have laid it on the ground, a provision only for manure. Let us then acknowledge the goodness of God, and take care to "render unto him according to what we have received." But, let us reap more than temporal blessings from the field, let us gather spiritual blessings also; let us extend our thoughts to that period—that solemn, that joyful period, referred to in our text.]

The text is part of our Lord's own explanation of his parable of the tares and the wheat. "The kingdom of Heaven;" that is, the reign of God on earth by his Gospel, "is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field; but, while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat:" at length, behold, to the surprise of all, wheat and tares, mingled together, covered the whole field. The servant proposed to the master to weed out the tares; but as there would be danger of pulling up the wheat with the tares, the proprietor gave orders that they should be let alone; and then at harvest time, the tares, a pernicious weed (not what

* This sermon is intended for the season of harvest; but if it be read, publicly, at any other time of the year, this passage included in brackets, may be omitted.

we call tares) should be bound up in bundles and be burnt; and the wheat, the valuable grain, carefully housed: verse 24, &c.

The disciples of Christ not exactly comprehending their master's meaning in this parable, took the first opportunity, in private, of requesting its explanation. This he readily gave; for "if any one lack wisdom," and pray for it, it shall be granted. He thus explained it: "He that sowed the good seed, is the Son of man;" that is, Christ himself. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom;" that is, sincere Christians: "but the tares are the children of the wicked one:" the enemy that sowed them is the Devil: the harvest is the end of the world: and to the season of harvest, the end of the world may be justly compared, for it is an appointed, fixed, expected time: it is a separating time; and it is a joyful time.

The word "Harvest," in Scripture, has various applications, which it may first be proper to notice. Sometimes it signifies that favourable period in which the Gospel of Christ is received, as it always ought to be, with a ready and obedient mind. When our Lord observed the great multitudes which pressed to hear him, in the cities and villages where he preached and healed, his heart was "moved with compassion; and he said to his disciples, The harvest is truly plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Matt. ix. 37. At another time, when he beheld the Samaritans of Sychar coming forth to hear him, he said, "Behold the (barley) fields, for they are white enough for harvest!" John, iv. 35. His joy in these pleasing appearances was like the joy experienced by us when we perceive the ripened corn. And do we not in this country, and at this time, behold such appearances? Have we not observed, for many years past, a far greater attention to the Gospel than formerly? Has not God multiplied the number of faith-

ful preachers, and serious hearers? Yes, he has; and we bless his holy name. And are not the fields abroad ripening too? Has not the Lord of the harvest sent forth to the heathen lands many laborious Missionaries? and are not multitudes of Hindoos, Hottentots, Indians, Negroes, and others, become the first fruits of a harvest far more abundant, yet to be expected?

Sometimes the word "Harvest" is to be taken in a very different sense, and signifies those dreadful judgments of Heaven upon a sinful nation, in war, famine, or pestilence; by which vast multitudes are cut down like the stalks of corn in the field. Thus, in the book of Joel the prophet, the Lord, referring to war, saith, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe—multitudes! multitudes in the day of decision (or of *threshing*)." Joel iii. 13. So when the destruction of Babylon is predicted, Jer. li. 33,—"the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor; yet a little while and the time of her harvest shall come!"—War is a dreadful calamity: it is one of the most terrible scourges with which the God of justice punishes a guilty nation for its wickedness; when a people have, by their vices, their irreligion, their unbelief, their persecutings, filled up the measure of their iniquities, as the Amorites did, and as the Jews did; then wrath, in the shape of the sword, comes upon them to the uttermost, and mows them down like grass or corn in the field. O! what desolations of this kind hath Europe for many years past beheld! and may Repentance and Reformation prevent the dire repetition of such an harvest!

But, in our text, "The Harvest" means that awful period in which the present state of things shall cease, emphatically called "the End of the world!" —*the End of the world!* observe the words. Awful words! the end of the world! Let us stop, and contemplate for a moment, what each of us must personally witness. These eyes shall behold the wonderful objects which that day shall present; these ears shall hear the tremendous trumpet which

shall announce the event; these hearts shall flutter with joy, or tremble with terror, at the decision, the final decision, of our everlasting state, which shall then be pronounced.

What a humiliating expression is this,—the END of the World! And will this present world, with all its great and magnificent works; the improvements of ages, the labours of philosophers, and artists, and statesmen, and agriculturists; its libraries, castles, cathedrals, palaces; must all come to nought, must all be demolished, must all be consumed with fire? Yes, the decree is gone forth, and cannot be reversed; the day is fixed, and cannot be altered. O! "men of the world, whose portion is in this life," how tormenting is this truth to you!

An end? Yes, the end of all worldly possessions! "We brought nothing into this world" when we were born, and "it is certain we can carry nothing out of it" when we die; and, mark it, the end of every man's life is, *to him*, the end of the world. In vain the wealthy and prosperous man projects his schemes of future enjoyment: and says, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods: and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Foolish man! worldly man! Is this thy happiness, to eat and drink, and be merry? God forgotten! thy soul neglected! Salvation slighted! —But hear! the end, the end is at hand; "*this night* shall thy soul be required of thee!"

All worldly honours must come to an end. At present, distinctions of high and low, rich and poor, are necessary; but they will come to an end. All the high-sounding titles of Lords, and Earls, and Dukes, and Princes, shall be known no more; no distinction will then be valued but the distinction that grace made in the states and in the hearts of men.

" How lov'd, how valued once, avails thee not,
To whom related, or by whom begot;
A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
'Tis all thou art, and all the *proud* shall be."

Then also will be an end to all the *means of grace*,—so we call those ordinances of religion, those opportunities we now enjoy of instruction by Sabbaths, Bibles, Sermons, and the conversation and example of pious persons around us. The throne of grace is now open; we may freely approach it, and obtain mercy and grace; but it will not be so always. No proclamation of pardon, through the blood of the Lamb, will ever more salute the sinner's ear; but it will be solemnly declared from Heaven, " He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still."

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We now proceed to the principal thing intended in this discourse, which is to shew.—*Why the End of the World is compared to the Harvest.*

1. The end of the world may be justly compared to a harvest, because,—*It is an appointed, fixed, ordained, and expected time.* The God of nature has wisely appointed the order and succession of the seasons. After the Deluge, when God promised no more to destroy the earth by water, he also engaged that, " while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night should not cease." The experience of more than four thousand years has convinced us of the faithfulness of God to this promise; and by the same authority, " it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment;" death and judgment are as certainly fixed and appointed as seed-time and harvest are, and may as confidently be expected. Yes; " God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world

in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained. The seasons are rolling on: and when the spring hath passed, and we are far advanced in the summer, we know that the harvest is at hand; and it would be deemed very unreasonable to question its approach. Men, indeed, may labour to reason themselves out of the belief of what they dread, as the apostle Peter predicted that some would do, in the latter days of the world: the infidels he describes are "scoffers" at religion; men who "walk after their own lusts," despising the commandments of God: these men say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" for all things, say they, remain, age after age, the same; but the apostle reproves them, by reminding them that the world was once destroyed by water, "according to the word of God;" and, "according to the same word," it shall finally be destroyed by fire. The season of harvest is fixed by the irreversible decree of God.

2. The end of the world may be compared to a harvest, *because it is a separating time*; and so it is expressed in the parable before us:—"The tares and the wheat grew *together* until harvest;" but then the reapers are directed to "gather first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but to gather the wheat into the barn." Jesus Christ, ver. 41, explains this, as signifying the separation which shall be made at the end of the world: "the angels shall gather out of his kingdom (his church) all things that offend, and them that do iniquity;" all who call themselves Christians (for others are outside of the hedge of the gospel-field) who by their wickedness are an offence and scandal to their holy profession, who pervert and abuse the Gospel, by their dangerous errors, or gross immoralities, and thereby grieve and offend the ministers and friends of true religion. They shall be separated. Now they are mingled with sincere Christians in the same churches, in the same families, and for wise ends permitted by Christ to remain with them;

spared, it may be, for the sake of their pious friends, or spared to assist the cause of God by external aid, as some of them do; but at the harvest, the separation shall take place; and O! what will be their fate! they shall be cast into a furnace of fire! "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth!"—deep lamentation, anguish, and despair, aggravated by a recollection of the privileges they once enjoyed and abused, and the vain hope which, as professed disciples, mingled with the true ones, they once entertained.

On the other hand, how happy and glorious shall believers appear! "they shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father!"—they shall possess a glory and a radiancy like the sun itself, and be fixed for ever in the kingdom of their Father, to enjoy the transforming vision of his face! Then will God, by his angels, "gather together his saints," even they "who made a covenant with him by sacrifice,"—the sacrifice of Christ; by which, through faith, they were reconciled to God. And then shall all the world "return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that served God, and him that served him not."

3. The end of the world may be compared to the Harvest, because it is a season of great joy: "the joy of harvest" is proverbial, and signifies a high degree of joy and satisfaction; and the joys of God's people are represented as the highest, because they are superior to those of the men of the world "in the time that their corn and their wine are increased."

But O, what tongue can describe, what heart can conceive of the joys and triumphs of that grand harvest of which we speak! The joy of the Saviour himself,—the joy of angels,—the joy of ministers,—the joy of all the redeemed!

It will be a day of delight to the Lord JESUS CHRIST; for then shall be presented before his throne "a multitude which no man can number, of

all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; who, with a loud voice, shall say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Then, indeed, shall he behold, with inexpressible pleasure, "the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." From the day that he ascended in our nature to Heaven, he has seen and welcomed the purchase of his blood, one after another, admitted into glory; but then shall he behold them all together; glorified both in body and soul, and they shall be "for ever with the Lord." This was "the joy set before him," which he never lost sight of in the days of his humiliation; for which he calmly endured the cross, and despised the shame. The prospect of this cheered his spirit, while a man of sorrows; when the Seventy reported the success of their mission, and when the Samaritans flocked to him for instruction, then he rejoiced in spirit: but now he possesses "the fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

The ANGELS also will exceedingly rejoice. They were ministering spirits to the Lord of glory when on earth: they gladly announced his birth; they ministered to him in the wilderness; they strengthened him in the garden; they attended his resurrection; and they accompanied him in his triumphal entrance into glory; and as they waited on the Head, so do they also upon the members of the body; they are "ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation;" and we are assured that they report with joy in Heaven, the conversion of sinners upon earth. How great then will be their delight when they shall behold their whole charge fully redeemed, and completely happy! having no further occasion for their benevolent services, but exceedingly grateful for having enjoyed them.

And will not the MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL share in the general joy of this delightful harvest? Who will be more joyful than they? Who can have more occasion for joy? Once they laboured hard in

their studies, in their pulpits, in their pastoral visits. The greater part of them were poor and despised for their Master's sake; and many fell victims to their labours and their sufferings for the elect's sake. Yet, sometimes, perhaps, their hearts were cheered when an individual or two came forward, and praised God for what he had done by their instrumentality; but probably ministers are informed only of a very small part of the good they do; this information is reserved for the harvest-day, according to what St. Paul said to the Thessalonians; "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" What is it to be? "Are not even ye"—ye, believing and converted people, whose sincerity was evinced by "your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope;"—"ye shall be our crown of rejoicing (or glorying) in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming." What though neither fame nor emolument rewarded the labours of the humble pastor or evangelist, it will be joy and recompence enough, when he is permitted "in the day of Christ," and "in the presence of Christ," to present the fruit of his labours, saying, "Here am I, and the (spiritual) children which thou hast given me."

Finally. The joy of every saved sinner will be inexpressibly great. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Joy is sown, and the crop is secured by the Almighty hand that sowed it. It may long lie buried in the earth; but let the believer wait patiently, as the husbandman doth, "we shall reap if we faint not:" and remember that it is written, "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" if we have "sown to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Now is the seed-time: the harvest will surely arrive. The Christian may "sow in tears," the tears of repentance; but "he shall reap in joy;" his repentance will not be repented of. Angels re-

joiced to witness such a sowing; and the believer shall rejoice when he receives the fruits. His careful study of the word of God, his regular attendance on the means of grace, the hours he devoted to closet-retirement, fasting and prayer; his bold profession of Christ before men; his rigid abstinence from sin and carnal pleasure, and his holy walk and conversation (despised by the world as needless precision) his generous support of the cause of Christ, and his compassion to the poor and needy, shall not fail of receiving a gracious recompence: his joy shall be great, for all his prayers are answered; all his fears are banished, all his hopes are realized, all the promises are fulfilled, and all his desires gratified to the utmost; yea, infinitely exceeded. "He rejoices before the Lord with the joy of harvest."

## CONCLUSION.

1. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Will this vain world soon come to an end? Then let us not set our hearts upon it. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which *is not*," or which will soon cease to be? or, what is the same thing to thee, which thou must soon leave; it may be, to-morrow? O guard against the love of the world; the love of sin ruins many; the love of the world ruins far more; for, "if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us." "Use the world, then," as not abusing it; "for the fashion of this world passeth away." "Let your moderation be known unto all men;—the Lord is at hand."

2. How important is the present moment! Remember, it is the sowing time; and we sow for eternity. Let me ask you, What have *you* been sowing? Has it been to the flesh, or to the Spirit? *Young man!* how do you employ your leisure hours? Do you read your Bible? Do you pray? Do

you observe the Sabbath, and hear the word of God? Do you watch and pray against temptation, and shun the places and persons and amusements which are dangerous? Remember,—"whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." *Busy tradesman!* you have many cares, and are "diligent in business;" but are you also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?" You have many cares, but remember Christ's words,—"One thing is needful;" and, O! seek "that good part which shall never be taken away from you." *Careful mother!* you too, like Martha, "are cumbered about much serving;" your little family engages, perhaps engrosses, all your cares and all your affections. You cannot forget your babe; take care that you do not forget your soul: you dare not neglect your children; dare not neglect your salvation. And, O sinner! thou who livest in the practice of known iniquity, what crop do you expect from the seed you are sowing? Every seed produces its proper fruit; and so will thine.—What fruit may be expected from oaths and curses, from whoredom and adultery, from drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking? Conscience tells thee what. Ah! the "end of these things is death!" So long ago as the time of Job, this was the observation:—"Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same." O turn from sin, and God will pardon you; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

3. Lastly. Here is much encouragement for serious and sincere Christians. You, blessed be God, have been enabled to "sow to the Spirit;" fear not then; "God is faithful, who hath promised." The crop is secure, and the harvest is near. And then, O the joy of the expected harvest! We finish with the word of God. "He that goeth forth, and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

# COLLECTS,

OR

## SHORT PRAYERS,

ADAPTED TO

# THE VILLAGE SERMONS:

WITH

## GENERAL FORMS OF PRAYER.

FOR

*FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS.*

# COLLECTS,

*&c. &c.*

## VOL. I.

SERMON I.—*The Conversion of the Jailer.*

HOLY, holy, holy Lord God Almighty! Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; and thou hast said, The soul which sinneth shall die. We confess, O Lord, that we have sinned, and done evil in thy sight! We have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep; and if thou, Lord, shouldst mark our iniquities, and deal with us according to our sins, we can never stand in the judgment; but must be consigned to the dreadful punishment which our sins have deserved!

May each of us seriously enquire, as the awakened jailer did, What shall I do to be saved? May we sincerely desire to be saved from our sins!—from the guilt of them, that we may not be punished; and from the power of them, that they may not have dominion over us.

We bless thee, O God, for thy holy and blessed Gospel, which directs us to Christ, the all-sufficient Saviour! Thou hast been pleased to make him known to us, as able to save to the uttermost, all who come to thee by him. We desire to come to thee through him. Help us to believe in him to the saving of our souls! Enable us cordially to receive thy testimony concerning him, and to rely upon him alone for salvation! O give us thy Holy Spirit to work this faith in our hearts, that so we may have joy and peace in believing, and bring forth all the fruits of good living, which are to thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON II.—*The Broad and the Narrow Way.*

ALMIGHTY GOD! thou hast now set before us life and death,—blessing and cursing! We have heard from our Saviour's lips that there are only two ways in which we can walk. The broad way of Carelessness, Carnality, and Sin, which certainly leads to endless

ruin; and the narrow way of Repentance, Faith, and Holiness, which leads to eternal life. Grant, O most merciful God, that we may immediately resolve, by thy grace, which we now heartily implore, to forsake the broad way, however difficult we may find it so to do! Suffer us not to proceed in it another step; but may we determine, at all events, and without a moment's delay, to strive to enter in at the strait gate. May we do this, whatever it may cost us! although the world, the flesh, and the devil may oppose us, yet enable us to escape for our lives, and flee for refuge to the Saviour, lest we be consumed! Strengthen us, O Lord, by thy Holy Spirit, that henceforth we may pursue the narrow way that leads to thee and to Heaven! O work in our hearts that genuine repentance, that true faith, and that gospel-holiness which are found in all the travellers to Sion! and this we beg for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

## SERMON III.

### *The Nature, Spirituality, and Use of the Law.*

MOST holy God, thou art the Creator of all mankind! Thou hast made man a rational being, and given to him for the rule of his actions, a law which is holy, just, and good! It was meet, right, and our bounden duty to keep thy law, which justly requires of us to love thee with all our heart, and to love our neighbours as ourselves; but, alas! we have been far from doing this,—we have sinned against thee, and broken thy holy law in thought, word, and deed. Thy law, O God, is spiritual, and reaches to the secret thoughts of the heart, requiring truth in the inward parts; but we confess with shame and grief, that we have regarded iniquity in our hearts, and often cherished unholy desires for things forbidden! We find, therefore, that the law which was ordained unto life, condemns us to death, by reason of our transgression, and curses the offender, even for a single sin. We, therefore, would not go about to establish our own righteousness; for by the deeds of the law can no one be justified. We desire, therefore, through the law, to be dead to the law, and no longer to seek justification by it; but we would gladly embrace the Gospel,

which assures us that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us: for his sake, O most merciful Father, blot out all our iniquities, and let us be accepted in the Beloved!—to whom, with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end! Amen.

SERMON IV.

*Christ, the End of the Law for Righteousness.*

O GOD of our salvation, we rejoice to hear that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth! May we be true believers, that he may be the end of the law for us! We rejoice in believing that what the law could not do, because of the weakness and infirmity of our fallen nature, thou, O God, in thy infinite wisdom and love, had done in another way,—even by giving thy dear Son to be our righteousness! He was made sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He perfectly obeyed all its precepts in his holy life! he endured its heaviest penalties in his meritorious death, and thus brought in an everlasting righteousness, by which the law is not only satisfied, but magnified, and made honourable!—O then enable each of us to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: I will greatly rejoice in the Lord;—my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness!—to him be glory, honour, and praise, now and for evermore:" Amen.

SERMON V.—*The Fall of Man.*

O THOU God of infinite purity and holiness, when it pleased thee to make man, thou didst make him in thine own image, after thine own likeness, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness! Thou didst make him upright: his mind was endued with the knowledge of thee; his will was conformed to thy will; and the affections of his heart were holy and spiritual: but, O how soon did he fall from that happy estate, by eating the forbidden fruit, exposing himself to the threatened curse, and involving all his posterity in sin and misery!

We confess, O Lord, with shame, the total depravity of our nature! Our minds are veiled in ignorance,—our hearts are carnal and full of enmity against thee; and from this bitter fountain have flowed the streams of innumerable transgressions.

We desire to repent as in dust and ashes. We pray to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, that we may become new creatures in Christ Jesus,—that being interested in the great redemption, we may be restored both to thy favour and thy image, so that finally we may be admitted into thy presence, and obtain an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in thy dear Son, who, with thee and the Holy Ghost are one God, blessed for evermore! Amen.

## SERMON VI.—*Redemption.*

FATHER of mercies and God of all grace, behold, at thy footstool, a company of thy sinful creatures, who by nature were slaves of Satan, and led captive by him at his will! We were tied and bound with the chains of our sins, and basely employed in the drudgery of our lusts.

From this sad condition we had neither the will nor the power to deliver ourselves; but, glory be to thy name, when there was no eye to pity, no hand to help, thou didst remember us in our low estate, and sent thy only-begotten Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, and a deliverance from all our tyrants!

O that we may be redeemed from sin, from Satan, from this present evil world, and, finally, from the grave! Being liberated by Jesus, may we be free indeed! and constantly watch and pray, lest we be entangled again with the yoke of bondage; and may we ever remember that we are no longer our own, but being bought with a price, must glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his!

Glory be to thee, blessed Jesus, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood! Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON VII.—*Regeneration.*

ALMIGHTY God, who hast declared in thy holy word, that except a man be born again, he cannot see thy kingdom, give us experimentally to know this great, this inward, this universal change! We confess that we are born to sin and prone to sin; but we beseech thee, O God, to create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us. May old things pass away, and all things become new! Through the word of thy grace, and the power of thy Holy Spirit, may we become new creatures! —may we die to sin and live unto righteousness! We have been baptized in the name of Jesus: O grant us not only the visible sign, but also the inward and spiritual grace, that so we may serve thee in this world in newness of life, and hereafter enter into thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour! Amen.

SERMON VIII.—*The Work of the Holy Spirit.*

BLESSED God, who hast declared in thy holy word, That if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, give unto each of us thy Holy Spirit, that by his teaching "we may have a right judgment in all things, and evermore rejoice in his holy comfort, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end!

May the Holy Spirit enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and lead us into all truth! May our hearts be purified by his holy influence! and let the joy of the Holy Ghost be our strength and our consolation! May he help our infirmities in prayer, and become, by all his sacred operations, the seal of our redemption! Amen.

SERMON IX.—*Repentance.*

O MOST holy Lord God, against whom we have greatly sinned, and who for our sins art most justly displeased,—thou hast revealed thy wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,—thou hast also declared, That, except we repent, we shall certainly perish; bestow upon us, we humbly beseech

thee, the grace of repentance. Take away the unfeeling heart of stone, and give soft and feeling hearts. Convince us of our sins;—may we feel genuine sorrow on account of them! Enable us to confess them with humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient hearts; and may we bring forth fruits meet for repentance, by turning every one from his wicked way, and hereafter living a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name! Amen.

### Sermon x.—*Holiness.*

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, thou hast said unto us "Be ye holy, for I am holy!" But we confess, with shame and grief, that we are by nature and practice unholy and impure in thy sight. We have reason to abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes;—we have cause to say "Woe be to us, for we are unclean!" Our guilt makes us afraid,—our defilement makes us ashamed; but, O grant, of thy infinite mercy, that our guilt may be removed, through faith in the blood of Christ, and our filth taken away by the grace of thy Holy Spirit! Put thy fear into our hearts,—make us humble, spiritual, and heavenly-minded; and may the love of Christ constrain us to depart from all iniquity, that so we may faithfully serve thee in the present world, as a people redeemed from their vain conversation, zealous of good works; and finally be admitted into the realms of perfect purity and happiness, where we shall see Jesus as he is, and be for ever with, and like our holy Lord!

### Sermon xi.—*Death and Judgment.*

Grant, O most holy God, that the solemn things we have now heard concerning Death and Judgment, may deeply and durably affect our hearts! Almighty God, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom! Oh teach us how frail we are!—how short our lives are; and how uncertain their continuance! May it be our first and chief care to be prepared for our great change! May sin, which is the sting of Death, be freely pardoned, for the sake of Jesus, who died for us, the just for the unjust!—and may the Holy Spirit make us meet for the inhe-

ritance of the saints in light! Then shall Death, though awful to Nature, be welcome to Grace, and prove our inexpressible gain.

And O, that in the great and dreadful day, when Christ shall come in solemn pomp to judgment, and when we must all appear before his tribunal, we may be found at his right hand, and hear him say to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."

### SERMON XII.—*Hell and Heaven.*

ALMIGHTY and most holy God, thou hast now set before us Life and Death, Heaven and Hell!—into one of these eternal estates must each of us soon enter! O suffer us not to be careless and unconcerned about our everlasting state! Our sins have exposed us to thy dreadful wrath, and it is of thy mercies that we are not already consumed; but great has been thy forbearance! May thy goodness lead us to repentance!—and may we be seriously concerned to flee from the wrath to come, even to Jesus Christ, the only deliverer from it!

Thou hast also set before us a most glorious and happy state, to which believers are entitled by the righteousness of Christ, and for which they are prepared by the Spirit of God. O that this glorious prize of the Christian calling, may ever be before our eyes!—and may we so run as finally to obtain it! Let not the alluring vanities of this world engage our hearts; but may we set our affections on things above! May our conversation be in Heaven, and when we are called hence by Death, may God graciously afford us an abundant entrance into his eternal kingdom and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

### SERMON XIII.—*A New Heart.*

BLESSED and gracious God, our heavenly Father: We are taught, by thy holy word, that our hearts are, by nature, very sinful; that they are hard, and proud, and worldly, and wicked, and deceitful, and unbelieving: and we feel that this is all true; and we are very sorry that though we are so young, our hearts are so

bad. But, Oh merciful God! do not be angry with us, and punish us as our sins deserve; but for the sake of Jesus Christ, who died to save poor sinners, have mercy upon us, and forgive all our past sins. And, as it has pleased thee to promise to give thy children a new heart, we pray thee to give us new hearts. Give us soft and feeling hearts, humble hearts, heavenly hearts, holy hearts, sincere hearts, and believing hearts, that so we may love and serve thee all our days, and when we die be received into Heaven.

## VOL. II.

SERMON XIV.—*The Lord's Prayer paraphrased.*

OUR Father, who art seated on a throne of glory in the highest heavens, help us to bow before thee with the deepest reverence, and at the same time with filial confidence, believing that thou art able and willing to supply all our wants.

We desire to glorify thy great name. May the whole race of mankind pay that dutiful veneration to thy divine Majesty which thy matchless perfections so justly demand.

May the kingdom of grace, which thy dear Son came to introduce among men, be more fully established, and more widely extended, until all the kingdoms of this world shall be included in it.

May thy will, which is always wise, holy, and good, be done by men on earth, as it is done by angels in Heaven: and may we mortals ever submit to it with becoming reverence and resignation.

Give us this day our daily bread. We would not seek the great things of this life; but we humbly desire a competent supply for our present necessities, leaving future provision to thy paternal care.

And though we have, in many respects, acted like disobedient children, yet we beseech thee, O merciful Father, for Christ's sake, to forgive all our sins, and blot out all our debts from the book of thy remembrance, even as we, by thy grace, freely forgive our fellow-creatures who have offended us.

And we pray to be kept from such circumstances as might render temptation exceedingly dangerous and hard to be withstood; and if we are so tempted, deliver us by thy mighty power from the evil one, the tempter, that he may not prevail and triumph over us.

And these things we are encouraged to ask, for thou art the supreme King of the world; thou hast almighty power to help us; and to thee be ascribed the glory of infinite perfection, and everlasting praise. Amen.

### SERMON XV.—*The Danger of Formality and Hypocrisy.*

O GOD, the great Searcher of all hearts, suffer us not to deceive ourselves with a mere form of godliness, while strangers to its power. Let us not be found amongst Formalists or Hypocrites. May we take warning from that solemn word of admonition which we have just heard, and which proceeded originally from the lips of him, who in the great decisive day will be our Judge! May we now truly know and diligently perform the will of God! May we, first of all, believe in Jesus, and receive him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and also be under the constant influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that so we may faithfully do the will of our Father who is in Heaven; and finally, in the day of judgment, be graciously admitted into the kingdom of glory, when the Lord of all shall say to his believing and obedient people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world."

### SERMON XVI.—*The Pharisee and Publican.*

O LORD God, bountiful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; thou keepest mercy for thousands, thou pardonest iniquity, transgression, and sin; neither dost thou retain thy anger for ever, because thou delightest in mercy. Look down in that mercy on us, who now humbly lift up our hearts unto thee. We, like the penitent publican of whom we have heard, would approach thee, deeply sensible of the sin of our nature and of the sin of our

lives; and with broken hearts and contrite spirits, would cry "God be merciful to us sinners!" We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty; provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings: the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father. For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, to the honour and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

SERMON XVII.—*Zeal for the Salvation of Sinners.*

ALMIGHTY God, we behold the transgressors and are grieved; our souls are vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked. We see the broad road which leads to destruction thronged with multitudes, while few are walking in the narrow way that leads to life. We lament that so many of our fellow-creatures are living in open sin; in carelessnes about their souls, in formality, and in error. We tremble to think of their danger; we earnestly wish they may partake of our happiness, both here and hereafter; that their souls may be saved; that thy name may be glorified; and that our country may be benefited. For this, O Lord, we lift up our hearts to thee, that thou wouldst be pleased to snatch these poor sinners as brands out of the fire; to shew them the danger of their present situation; and enable them now, whilst it is called To-day, to hear thy voice, and to cry to thee for mercy. And O! fill our hearts with gratitude, that thou hast called us, as we trust, by thy grace, out of darkness into thy marvellous light, and translated us from the kingdom of Satan into that of thy dear Son. Keep us, O Lord, unto the end; may we glorify thee upon earth, and then be admitted into thy presence, to see thy face, and sing thy praise for ever and ever; Amen.

SERMON XVIII.—*The Prodigal Son.*

TEACH us, O Lord, we beseech thee, to learn from what we have now heard, the egregious folly of sinners, and the wonderful compassion of thy heart. We see in the Prodigal an emblem of ourselves. We, like him, have wickedly departed from thee, despising thy parental care and thy merciful restraints; we have indulged many forbidden lusts, and ungratefully abused the bounties of Heaven. But, blessed be thy name, if thou hast, by any means, brought us to ourselves. Blessed be God for his rod, as well as for his word. Happy afflictions are those which cause us to bethink ourselves, and incline us to return to our Father! If never before, let us now say, "We will arise, and go to our Father. Father! we humble ourselves before thee; we are ashamed; we are grieved that we have offended thee, and injured ourselves. But, surely, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. We are encouraged by the prodigal's reception to come to thee. O receive us; pity, pardon, and embrace us as thy children. Admit us into thy family and to thy table. Clothe us with the Robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, adorn us with the ornaments of sanctifying grace and adopting love. Never more suffer us to depart from thee; but may we dwell in thy house for ever, to adore the riches of thy sovereign grace, and to glorify thy goodness to all eternity!

SERMON XIX.—*Christ the Way.*

GLORY be to thee, O God, that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel; and although, as sinners, we have deserved thy dreadful wrath in a future state, yet, that there is a world of light, and glory, and happiness provided for the redeemed; and that thou hast, in infinite mercy, revealed to us the path of life. We rejoice to learn that there is a way to the Father and to Heaven, and that Jesus Christ himself is 'the way.' Holy Father, we humbly approach thee in his name. In the new and living way, consecrated for us by his precious blood, we come to thee; and we desire to do this with confidence and

boldness, in the full and assured belief of the truth, and with cheerful hope of a gracious acceptance, believing that this is the true way, the living way, the sure way: and in this way we desire to walk all the days of our life. And while we are in this world, we desire to walk so as to please God; not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit; not according to the way of the world, but in the highway of holiness, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And we desire to look forward with joyful hope of future and everlasting glory: that after a life of communion with God here, we may be brought to Heaven, there to be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple, and to serve him in a superior manner for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON XX.—*Coming Sinners welcome to Christ.*

O GOD of all grace, we are greatly encouraged by that most gracious promise which we have now been considering. Blessed Jesus, thou art the only, the all-sufficient Saviour. Thou art *able* to save to the uttermost all who come to the Father by thee; and we have now been assured that thou art as *willing* to save as thou art able,—that thou wilt not reject any sinner who comes to thee for salvation. Blessed Lord, thy name and thy nature is Love; thy love brought thee down from Heaven, laid thee in the manger, and nailed thee to the cross. Thou didst go about doing good, and thou never didst refuse to help the sick and the miserable, when they came to thee for relief; and we believe thou art the same gracious Lord, now thou art in Heaven; that thou art rich in grace and mercy to all who call upon thee. Thou art still saying, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Adorable Saviour, we come at thy call. We are ignorant; we come unto thee, to teach us. We are guilty; we come unto thee, as the great Atonement for sin. We are weak and exposed; we come to thee, to strengthen and defend us: O do thou be all in all unto us, for body and for soul, for time and for eternity; and we will ascribe blessing and honour, glory and power unto thee for ever and for ever! Amen.

SERMON XXI.—*The vain Excuses of Sinners exposed.*

MERCIFUL Father! how great is thy goodness to the children of men! Our sins deserve thy wrath, and justly might we be condemned, and punished for ever. But such is thy grace, that thou hast provided for us a great salvation, which it hath pleased thee to compare to a royal feast; and thou hast sent thy servants to invite us to it, saying, "Come, for all things are now ready." O make us heartily willing, and truly glad to come at thy call, and partake of that heavenly food, of those rich dainties, which will secure our eternal life. O that by faith we may feed upon Christ, "whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed!"

We are ashamed to think that we, or any of our fellow sinners, should refuse thy invitation; preferring the world, the flesh, and sin, to the Gospel. O that they may no longer make vain and wicked excuses, lest thou shouldst be angry, and swear in thy wrath that they shall never taste of thy supper! But O make us willing in the day of thy power, thankful and glad to receive thy proffered benefits, without money and without price, that so we may be happy both here and hereafter, and glorify thy name to all eternity! and this we beg for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

SERMON XXII.—*Christ the Bread of Life.*

O GOD, we thank thee for the meat which perisheth, and by which our perishing bodies are sustained during our continuance in the present world; but we thank thee still more for the meat which endureth to everlasting life, and which is the free gift of Jesus Christ to a lost world. O, that we may sincerely cry, "Evermore give us of this bread;" this bread of life, which came down from Heaven; and of which, if any man, by faith partake, he shall not die, but live for ever.

O let us not be indifferent, or careless, with regard to this food! We labour, and use diligence, for the supply of our bodily wants; may we be still more diligent to obtain food for our souls. May we carefully

improve Sabbaths, Bibles, Sermons, and all the means of grace; and, while using these, may the Holy Spirit of grace and truth enlighten our minds, and glorify Christ in our hearts, that, daily feeding by faith on him, we may be strengthened to pursue our Christian course, and finally obtain everlasting life.

SERMON XXIII.—*A Sinner changed by Grace.*

MOST HOLY GOD, we acknowledge with shame and grief the depravity of our nature, which inclines us to pursue the broad way that leads to destruction. We have followed the devices and desires of our own hearts too much, and walked according to the course of this vain and wicked world. But we desire that the time past may suffice to have acted this base and foolish part. We now perceive that we have wasted much of our precious time, and that sin is a useless, hurtful, and dangerous thing, dishonourable to thee our God, and contrary to our Christian profession:—create in us, therefore, we beseech thee, clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us; make us new creatures, and write thy holy law on our minds, that so the rest of our lives may be pure and holy. Help us, by thy Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body, and to crucify the old man with his fleshy lusts; and being united to Christ by faith, may we obey his precepts, and imitate his example. Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.—*Dives and Lazarus.*

GLORIOUS GOD! we thank thee for setting before us, in thy word, these great things which belong to our peace. We have seen, in this parable, what will be the end of the righteous and of the wicked. Suffer us not to be like the rich sinner, who had his portion in this life. Rather would we resemble the poor sufferer, whose evil things were confined to the present world. O let us not make provision for the flesh, and be anxious about what we shall eat, drink, and wear, while we are neglecting our souls and their salvation; for what would it profit us, could we gain the whole

world and lose our own souls?—but enable us, we beseech thee, by thy Holy Spirit, to take heed to thy word. We have not only Moses and the prophets, but we have also Christ and the apostles; we have those Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation. O may we thereby be effectually taught to flee from the wrath to come; to flee to Jesus Christ, as our refuge and our righteousness, that, being found in him, and made meet for glory, we may, when removed by death, sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the heavenly kingdom. O grant us this happiness for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON XXV.—*The Pleasures of Religion.*

O GOD of all comfort, thou hast in rich mercy provided for the peace and pleasure of thy sinful creatures, even in the present evil world. Man is, indeed, born to trouble, because born in sin; and while he lives in sin he can find no true happiness. We lament our folly in having ever sought for pleasure in the ways of iniquity; but now, holy Father, we desire to turn from our sins unto thee, being fully convinced that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. O let us henceforth seek and find our happiness in the possession of Christian graces, in the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and in the performance of Christian duties. O persuade the young that Christ's yoke is easy, that his burden is light, and that his commandments are not grievous; and may we know by experience that peace which passeth all understanding, and that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, abounding in hope through the Holy Ghost; who, with the Father and the Son, is one God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.—*The Value of the Soul.*

O THOU, who art the Father of our spirits, enable us by thy special grace deeply to consider their unspeakable value, and, above all things, to seek their eternal salvation. Suffer us not to be so foolish and brutish as to prefer the ease and gratification of our mortal bodies to the safety and everlasting happiness of our immortal souls! and as sin has endangered our souls, and

made them liable to everlasting misery, may we now earnestly seek and obtain the salvation that is in Christ. As he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to thee through him, may we believe in him to the saving of our souls; and knowing whom we have believed, and being fully persuaded that he is able to keep what we have committed unto him, may we experience joy and peace; and after having served the Lord with our redeemed bodies and spirits, may both be finally made happy and glorious in the realms of eternal felicity, through him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—to whom be glory in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

# VOL. III.

## SERMON XXVII.—*Conviction of Sin.*

ALMIGHTY God! who didst speak in times past to the fathers by the prophets, who hast since spoken to mankind by thy Son, and dost now speak to us in the holy Scriptures, and by the preaching of the Gospel; grant, we beseech thee, that the Gospel may come to us, not in word only, but in power: may the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of our Saviour, convince us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

We confess, O Lord, that we are guilty before thee. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. We stand at thy bar, O thou Judge of the earth, condemned by thy holy law, and condemned in our own consciences: but, blessed be thy name, we have an Advocate with thee, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. Have mercy upon us, O God, for his sake! Have mercy upon us, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out our transgressions.

Glory be to thee, O Lord, that thou art still in the midst of thy church of a truth, as thou wast in former

times. Thanks be unto God, that by the preaching of his Gospel, accompanied by the power of his Spirit, some who once trusted in themselves that they were righteous, have been convinced and judged, and made to cry out, What shall we do to be saved? O that such happy effects may follow the words which have now been spoken! We beg it for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Advocate and Mediator.

### SERMON XXVIII.—*The Lamb of God.*

FATHER of mercies, we thank thee that we have heard this joyful sound! truly, these words are glad tidings of great joy; for we have sinned, and come short of thy glory. When we consider our guilt and pollution, and remember that thou art holy and just, we are ready to ask, Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow before the most high God? what offering can we bring, and what sacrifice can we make, to atone for our unnumbered transgressions? But thanks be unto God, who has found a ransom! Thou, O Lord, hast thyself provided a Lamb for the burnt-offering,—the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. We desire to lay our hands upon the head of this sacrifice and to make it our own. We desire, with gratitude and joy, to accept of the offered grace. We pray that the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son may cleanse us from all sin.

Be pleased, O Lord, so to bless the discourse now delivered, that some who have hitherto been looking only at the vanities of this world, may henceforward with attention, with faith, and with affection, behold the Lamb of God! And may they who have already beheld this glorious object, be excited, by what they have heard, to look with closer attention, with stronger faith, and with more ardent love than ever before. Thus may we learn to hate sin, to be patient in suffering, and bold in the cause of truth and righteousness.

Help us all from the heart to join in the chorus of Heaven, and say, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

## SERMON XXIX.—*The Conversion of St. Paul.*

THOU, O God, art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders; thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands. Thou saidst, Let there be light, and there was light. And thou art also the Creator of all things in the new world of grace. We adore thee, O Lord, for that glorious example of thy new-creating power which has been at this time brought before our eyes. We praise thee for the riches of thy grace in forgiving the persecuting Saul, and for turning the persecutor into a holy apostle. We thank thee for all the good which thou didst effect by his preaching and living, and for all the good which thy church still derives from his writings, and from the pattern of thy long-suffering, which is seen in mercy shown to him.

O God, we beseech thee at this time to exert the same almighty energy by which Saul of Tarsus was converted and saved. Are there not before thee some whose minds are still benighted, and whose hearts are full of ill-will against Jesus and his Gospel? Are there not many who live without prayer, having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof?

Our hearts' desire and prayer for them is, That they may be saved. O that, from this very time, if it please thee, it may be said of this and of that man, Behold he prayeth!

## SERMON XXX.—*The Love of God.*

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men: we bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. Everlasting praises be unto God, who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! We

beseech thee, Lord, to give us that due sense of all thy mercies; and in particular, of this thy greatest mercy; that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

## SERMON XXXI.—*The Sabbath Day.*

THOU, Lord, art good, and doest good. We thank thee for setting apart a day of holy rest, and for connecting a blessing with the observance of it. May every returning Sabbath be welcome to us. May we always be glad when they say unto us, Let us go into the house of the Lord. May we ever find that a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.

Thou, O God, art a Spirit; help us in all our devotions to worship thee in spirit and in truth. May our fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We praise thee, Lord, that thou hast commanded thy servants to go out into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and that, through thy good providence, the Gospel has been preached to us. We delight to hear that Jesus, who died for our sins, rose again for our justification, on the first day of the week. We would say on the morning of every Sabbath, This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, send now prosperity: may it please thee to give to all thy servants increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

Have compassion, gracious Lord, on those who are saying to thee, by their conduct, if not in words, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Have compassion on those who spend the hours of the Sabbath in worldly business, in pleasure, or in sin; who neglect thy worship, and will not hear thy Gospel. May they be born again, and

become new creatures in Christ Jesus, that so, they also being taught to call the Sabbath a delight, may remember it, to keep it holy.

And O that it may be our happiness at last to enter the rest which remaineth for the people of God, and to spend an eternal Sabbath in the kingdom of Heaven, through his merits who once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

## SERMON XXXII.—*The Only Foundation.*

THANKS be unto God for this stone, this tried stone, this precious corner-stone, this sure foundation; may God help us to build upon it!

May Jesus Christ be the foundation of our knowledge in spiritual things. Blessed Lord, thou art saying to each of us, as thou didst to the blind man in the Gospel, What wouldst thou that I should do unto thee? May every one who has been hitherto spiritually blind reply, Lord, grant that I may receive my sight! May God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

May Christ be the foundation of our acceptance with God the Father. We read that the wages of sin is death, and that the soul that sinneth shall die. We have sinned and deserve to perish; but may we be redeemed from the curse of the law through him who was made a curse for us. Thus may we be accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of thy grace.

May Jesus Christ be the foundation of our obedience. May we have that faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world; that being redeemed from all iniquity, we may be zealous of good works. Work in us, O God, both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.

And in Jesus Christ may we have real and lasting felicity. Sayun to us, 'O Lord, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy iniquities, and will not remember thy sins.' 'Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.' Through the merits of the Saviour may we, after death, arrive in thy presence, where is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

SERMON XXXIII.—*The Doctrine of the Trinity.*

We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. The gods of the heathens are vanity and a lie. Thou art the only living and true God. Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. We will worship the Lord our God, and him only will we serve.

We desire, O God, to receive with humble faith, all that thy holy word reveals concerning thine incomprehensible nature. Truly, O Lord, thou art highly exalted above all blessings and praise, and above all the thoughts of finite creatures. Who, by searching, can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it. We adore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one God of our salvation. Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!"

And while we worship the Triune Jehovah, we pray to partake of those spiritual and eternal blessings which proceed from a covenant-God. O may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all! Amen.

SERMON XXXIV.—*The Power of the Gospel.*

O THAT the Gospel of Christ may be the power of God to our Salvation! To this end, be pleased, O Lord, to grant that every one here present, may truly and heartily believe it, embrace it, and hold it fast.

We praise thee for the ministry of reconciliation, for the glorious truth that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. We thank thee that, in thy great condescension and compassion, thou hast sent thy Messenger to invite us to be reconciled to thee. Be thou, gracious God, for Jesus' sake, reconciled to us.

We also entreat thee to subdue our iniquities. Let them not have dominion over us. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us.

Save us, O Lord, from the folly and guilt of being ashamed of thee and of thy word. Help us patiently to submit to all the reproaches which may come upon

us for an attachment to thy truth; and grant, that instead of being ashamed of the Gospel, we may be so thoroughly satisfied, from happy experience of its transcendent excellency, that, in the face of a scoffing world we may say with thy servant Paul, 'God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ:' and O that, in the last great day, when the enemies of the Saviour shall be ashamed before him, it may be our unspeakable happiness to be owned by him as his disciples and friends!

SERMON XXXV.—*Sin and Death, &c.*

WRITE these words on our hearts, we beseech thee, O Lord. Thou hast set before us life and death, the blessing and the curse. Help us to shun the road that leads to death, and to choose the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. We confess that we are by nature carnally minded, which is death: O make us spiritually minded, which is life and peace. From uncleanness, drunkenness, profanity, Sabbath-breaking, corrupt speech, and evil thoughts, good Lord deliver us. From every thing earthly, sensual, and devilish, save us, good Lord. The time past of our life may well suffice in which we wrought the will of the flesh. Now may we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We offer up our supplications, O God, on behalf of those who do not join with us in these petitions. We pray for those who are following, without remorse, the devices and desires of their own hearts; who are serving divers lusts and pleasures; who are dead while they live, and are in danger of eternal death. We beseech thee, Lord, to pity them in their miserable and awful condition. No power but thine can save them; but with thee all things are possible. O let the pitifulness of thy great mercy help them: that being made free from sin and becoming the servants of God, they may have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

SERMON XXXVI.—*Pardoning Mercy.*

THOU art justified, O God, when thou speakest; thou art clear when thou judgest. Our sins are as scarlet and crimson. We would not dissemble nor cloke them

before thy face; but confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, to the end we may obtain forgiveness of the same through thine infinite goodness and mercy.

We come, Lord, to thy throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy. Though our sins be as scarlet, O make them white as snow; though they be red like crimson, may they be as wool. May the blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanse us from all sin.

We bless thee, O Lord, for the kind and encouraging language in which thou hast been pleased to speak to us; for the condescending invitation and the gracious promise of which we have been hearing. O that not one of us may be so unreasonable, so ungrateful, and so foolish, as to neglect the invitation! O that not one of us may be so miserable as to live and die without enjoying the unspeakable blessing promised! For who may stand in thy sight, O Lord, when once thou art angry? And how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation! O that each of us, from the heart, may cry, God be merciful to me a sinner!

## SERMON XXXVII.—*The Penitent Thief.*

BLESSED Jesus! thou art full of compassion. Thou art able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come to God by thee. We praise thee for thy merciful kindness in descending from Heaven to Earth for us men, and for our salvation, We praise thee for that condescending love which made thee willing to be numbered with the transgressors; and we praise thee for that compassion, which, on the cross, thou didst manifest towards the dying criminal who implored thy help. O thou gracious Redeemer! thou art the same yesterday, to day, and for ever! Still art thou rich in mercy unto all that call upon thee; unto all that call upon thee in truth.

Let none, we beseech thee, be suffered to abuse this glorious example of thy pardoning mercy by continuing in sin; and by putting off, to a dying hour, the care of the immortal spirit. Grant that they who are tempted thus to act, may remember how uncertain it is when, and in what manner the messenger of death

shall come; and that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

We pray that the mercy shown to the dying thief may be the means of encouraging many a self-condemned trembling penitent to trust in the same mercy, believing that where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound. And O that the goodness of God may lead others to repentance! May the bright beams of mercy, reflected from the Saviour's cross, melt the stout-hearted rebel into tears of godly sorrow.

That these happy effects may follow the words which have now been addressed to the outward ear, we pray that the same divine influence, which caused repentance and faith to spring up in the heart of a once-hardened criminal, may descend on this assembly, and be imparted to every individual present.

O Lord Jesus, remember us, now that thou art in thy kingdom. Remember us with the favour which thou bearest to thy people. In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord, remember and deliver us.

### SERMON XXXVIII.—*The World to Come.*

TEACH us, O Lord, so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity. Help us to look, not on things which are seen, but at things which are not seen; because the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

O that we may be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead! On the solemn morning of the last day, when all that are in the dust of death shall rise, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, may it be our happiness to rise, with all the redeemed, to everlasting life. To this end grant us, O Lord, both the title to Heaven, and the fitness for it. We acknowledge that, shouldst thou deal with us after our sins, and reward us according to our iniquities, Hell and not Heaven would be our portion. We therefore pray to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. And O make

us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. As that world is a holy world, make us holy, that we may be prepared for it.

Have mercy, Lord, on those who have their portion in this life, who are often saying, What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? but never say, How shall we escape the damnation of Hell?—May they remember that there is but a step betwixt them and death; and that after death is the judgment. May they seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.

## SERMON XXXIX.—*Safety in the Ark.*

O GOD, we believe that thou wilt come to be our Judge. We believe that the storm of thine anger will burst on an ungodly world. We praise thee that thou dost so long spare thy rebellious creatures. Thou art not slack concerning thy promise, but art long-suffering to us ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

We thank thee that thou hast provided an ark of safety for perishing men. We account it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. We fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. Gladly and thankfully we enter the ark of salvation, and fain would we bring with us all that is dear to us. O that all here present, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, neighbours and friends, may come together into this blessed ark. We pray that not one may be left behind.

Thanks be unto God that yet there is room; that yet there is time and space for repentance; that still the preachers of righteousness are in his name inviting all who are ready to perish to enter in and be saved! O let not these repeated invitations be in vain! Let not the present invitation be in vain! Do thou, O Lord, out of Zion, command the blessing, even life for evermore. Amen.

# VOL. IV.

## SERMON XL.

### *The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ.*

O THOU who art the Father of Lights, enlighten our minds, we beseech thee, that we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Enable us to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. We bless thee that thou hast given us thy holy word, which is able to make us wise unto salvation. Remove, we beseech thee, all darkness from our minds, and all hardness from our hearts. May the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration the Scriptures were written, lead us into all truth. May he enable us to discern the glory of Christ, and to comprehend, in some degree, that love which passeth knowledge. Grant, O Lord, that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. May it give peace to our consciences, and holiness to our hearts. May we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Help us to walk as children of light, and to cause our light so to shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify thee our heavenly Father. Prepare us for the world of light and glory, and grant that we may have increasing evidence of a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. We ask these blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, to whom, with thyself, and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLI.—*The Heart taken.*

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature children of wrath, and children of the wicked one. We are ashamed and confounded when we think that our hearts, which should have been consecrated to thee, have been the dwelling-place of Satan; and that we have been led captive by him at his will. But, O most gracious God, de-

liver us, we beseech thee, from his dominion. We bless thee that thy dear Son was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil: we rejoice that he subdued the great enemy, and is able to make us also more than conquerors. Grant that we may enjoy the glorious liberty wherewith Jesus Christ makes his servants free. May we be delivered from the condemnation of sin by the blood of Jesus, and from its reigning power, by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. May our hearts now become the temples of the Holy Ghost. May he seal us unto the day of complete redemption, and be to us the earnest of the heavenly inheritance! May Satan be subdued under our feet; and may we be admitted into that world where temptation and trial shall be known no more. We ask it in the name of our dear Redeemer, to whom with thyself and the Divine Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLII.—*Christ is All.*

GOD and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we bless thee for all the gifts thou hast bestowed upon us; but most of all we bless thee for thine unspeakable gift. May we have a deep and humbling sense of our need of all those blessings which the Gospel reveals. May we be enabled to seek them, as thy free gift, through the blessed Redeemer. We are ignorant creatures, grant that Christ Jesus may be made unto us wisdom; we are guilty, may he be made to us righteousness; we are unholy, may he be made to us sanctification; we must soon die and see corruption, may he be made to us complete and eternal redemption. Grant, O Lord, that we may enjoy the blessedness of being united by faith to thy dear Son that we may from his fulness daily derive grace for grace: through him may we obtain strength for every duty, succour in every temptation, support in every trial, and at last, victory over death itself. Hear these our petitions, O God of love, for the sake of our Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ, unto whom be glory, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XLIII.—*Apostacy to be Dreaded.*

ETERNAL and ever blessed God, we thank thee that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. We bless thee that thou dost give to thy people eternal life, and that this life is in thy dear Son. Enable us to come to him, that we may be saved; and if by thy grace we have been enabled to come to Jesus, O let us never forsake the blessed Saviour. Permit neither the smiles nor the frowns, nor the cares of the world, to seduce us from the way of truth and holiness. May the love of Christ constrain us to follow him fully, and to dread the thought of wandering from his fold. May the great and good Shepherd ever guide us and defend us, and provide for us. And when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, may we fear no evil, but may we know that he is with us, and find that his rod and his staff comfort us. Unworthy, indeed, are we of mercies, so great as these which we now implore; but we ask them in the all-prevailing name of Jesus, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLIV.—*The Birth of Christ.*

MOST gracious and merciful God, we bless thee that when the fulness of the time was come, thou didst send forth thy Son into our world to redeem us from the curse of the law. We adore him as the brightness of thy glory, and the express image of thy person. O thou who didst cause the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ. May we feel our need of the Saviour; may we be enabled truly to believe on Jesus, to the saving of our souls. May we have satisfactory evidence that we have passed from death unto life, and that to us there is no more any condemnation. Deliver us, O Lord, from the power and malice of our great enemy, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Give us grace to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. May we be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and through him may we

be made more than conquerors, that Satan may be bruised under our feet. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy dear Son, to whom be glory, and honour, and praise, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XLV.—*The Cross of Christ.*

O THOU God of love, adored be thy name that thou hast so loved the world as to give thy dear Son to suffer and to die for sinners. We bless thee that he gave his life a ransom for many. We bless thee that he died, the just for the unjust; and that through him thou canst be just, and the sinner justified that believeth on his name. May our hearts be deeply affected by the consideration of the Saviour's sufferings and death. Through his atoning death may we obtain life eternal. By his stripes may we be healed. May we be justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We desire to glory in a Saviour's cross, and in that alone. May we feel the power of its attraction. By his cross may we be crucified to the world. No longer may we be ensnared by its vanities, or alarmed by its threatenings. Henceforth may we live to the glory of him who loved us, and who gave himself for us. May we esteem it our highest honour to suffer shame for his name. May we never be ashamed of him, but boldly confess him before men; and may he graciously acknowledge us when he comes in his glory to judge the world. And unto the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit be glory and honour, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XLVI. —*The Resurrection of Christ.*

ACCEPT our praises, O God, that Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he rose again from the dead, on the third day, according to the Scriptures. We bless thee for the clear and convincing evidence of the certainty of our Saviour's resurrection. We bless thee that he who was delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification, that our faith and hope might be in thee. Grant, O Lord, that we may know and feel the power of his resurrection. May we be quickened through Christ; that being delivered from condemna-

tion, we may live to thee. May the Spirit of life and grace dwell within us, and render us spiritually-minded, which is life and peace. May the life which we live in the flesh be henceforth a life of faith in thy dear Son. We rejoice that, because he lives, his people shall live also. Prepare us, O Lord, to behold his glory in the world above. When absent from the body, may we be present with the Lord; and when he shall come the second time, may our vile bodies, which must see corruption, be transformed into the likeness of his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Hear us, Father of mercies, for his sake; and unto him, with thyself and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLVII.—*The Descent of the Holy Spirit.*

OUR Father who art in Heaven; if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, wilt thou not give thy Holy Spirit to them who ask thee? Blessed be thy name for his glorious descent and miraculous operations on the day of Pentecost. Blessed be thy name for the gracious promise, that he should abide with the church for ever. Without him we can do nothing. Impart, we beseech thee, this heavenly gift. May the Holy Spirit be our teacher, leading us into all truth. May he be our Sanctifier, subduing all our iniquities, and sanctifying us in body, soul, and spirit, May he be our Comforter, giving us joy and peace in believing. May he be to us the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, sealing us to the day of redemption. Grant that we may be the temples of the Holy Spirit, and that it may be our anxious concern not to grieve him. May we be filled with the Holy Ghost; may we be filled with all the fulness of God. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy dear Son; and to the Father of mercies, the Son of his love, and the Spirit of his grace, be glory and honour for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XLVIII.—*Christ our Benefactor.*

O LORD our God, thou art good, and doest good to us; and thy tender mercies are over all thy works.

All thy works praise thee, and thy saints shall bless thee! they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness! We bless thee especially for that expression of thy goodness, which thou dost thyself commend, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We desire to love and to adore him who, while he lived upon earth, went about doing good. May we be interested by faith in all the benefits which flow from the labours of his life and the sufferings of his death! Grant, O Lord, that the mind that was in Christ may be also in us. May our hearts be under the constant influence of love to thee and love to man! May we not look only on our own things, but also on the things of others! May it be our desire and endeavour to do good to all men, so far as we have opportunity, and especially to them who are of the household of faith! Bless us and make us blessings! We ask it for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

### SERMON XLIX.—*The Christian Temper.*

MOST holy God, we bless thee for making known to us thy holy will, not only in the precepts of thy word, but also in the life and character of thy beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant that the mind which was in him may be also in us! May Christ dwell in our hearts by faith! and may we be rooted and grounded in love! Give us, we beseech thee, true humility. May we loathe ourselves on account of our iniquities, and have a deep sense of our daily imperfections!—Give us, we entreat thee, that holy filial fear of thee, which is the beginning of wisdom. Put thy fear into our hearts, that we may not sin against thee. Render us spiritually-minded by the constant indwelling of thy Holy Spirit in our hearts. Fix our affections on things above: and even in the engagements of the present life, enable us to be fervent in spirit, serving thee. May we be contented with the station and the circumstances allotted to us by thy providence in the present world; and under all the afflictions of life may we be enabled to say, 'Father, thy will be done!' Make us, we beseech thee, after the example of our blessed Saviour, meek and lowly in heart; and may we display in some degree the gentleness of Christ!

Call forth in our hearts a kind and merciful disposition towards our fellow-men. In all our dealings with them, may we manifest simplicity and godly sincerity, and prove ourselves to be Christians indeed, in whom is no guile. Hear us, holy Father, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

SERMON L.—*The Christian's Practice.*

FATHER of mercies and God of all grace, we give thee humble and hearty thanks for the glorious Gospel of thy grace. We rejoice that it bringeth salvation to the ear, to the understanding, and to the heart! We bless thee that it is designed for sinners of all nations and of every degree! We bless thee for the holiness it exhibits and requires! May it, by thy grace, effectually teach and constrain us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world! May we, by moderation in all lawful pursuits and enjoyments, so use the things of this world as not to abuse them! May we, by faith in the Redeemer, be clothed with his spotless righteousness, and be rendered holy in all manner of conversation and godliness! Enable us to live near to Christ, and to experience the blessedness of constantly abiding in him. From him may we derive all our qualifications for obedience, and all our joys and consolations; and, at the last great day, may we be presented holy, unblamable, and unreprovable in thy sight. In the Saviour's name we implore these great mercies; and to him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting praise! Amen.

SERMON LI.—*Nonconformity to the World.*

GREAT and glorious Jehovah, thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without abhorrence. We adore thee for that forbearance which thou hast long manifested to a world lying in iniquity, and overspread with corruption. O deliver us, through the blessed Redeemer, from this present evil world! Deliver us from the condemnation of the ungodly world. Deliver us from the spirit and temper of the men of the world. Suffer us not to be conformed to

the world in its errors, in its practices, or in its amusements. Give us, we beseech thee, that faith which overcomes the world. May we walk by that faith which realizes an unseen world, an unseen God, an unseen Saviour! Conform us, O Lord, in heart and life to thy holy will. May we be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is thy good, acceptable, and perfect will. Take entire possession of our hearts by thy Holy Spirit; and let no iniquity have dominion over us. Prepare us for that world of perfect holiness into which nothing can enter that defileth. Hear, merciful God, these our petitions, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour! Amen.

SERMON LII.—*Preparation for Death.*

ETERNAL and unchangeable Jehovah, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. May we ever remember, that it is appointed unto men once to die; and that after death there is the judgment. May we not presume even on another day, not knowing what a day may bring forth. Suffer us not to neglect the great salvation, or to delay to a future season the grand concern of life. Prepare us, O Lord, for death, for judgment, and for eternity. Grant us, by faith, a personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be justified freely by thy Grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! O may we now be accepted in the beloved! and at the great day of his appearing, may we be found in him! May we be delivered from the distressing fear of death, by trusting in him who hath subdued Death, and taken away its sting. Prepare us for that world into which Death can never enter. By the sanctifying influences of thy Holy Spirit fit us for thy presence above. Make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and when the time of our departure from this world shall arrive, may we depart in peace, and have an abundant entrance into thy heavenly kingdom. We present these our petitions in the name of the blessed Mediator; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever! Amen.

# VOL. V.

## SERMON LIII.—*Universal Good News.*

THANKS, everlasting thanks, be to thee, O God of mercy and love, for the good news of the Gospel! Blessed, for ever blessed, be thy name, for the message of grace sent from Heaven to ungodly sinners. We account it a faithful saying, and worthy of our most cordial acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, not excepting even the chief of them. O that none among us may refuse to hear him who speaketh from Heaven;—for how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? But, may we so hear that our souls may live! May we mix faith with the word, then shall it truly profit us; for thou, O Lord, hast said, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. O that we may enjoy the comforts of the Gospel, and walk according to its holy precepts; and, as it was mercifully designed for all nations, and commanded to be preached to every creature, speak the word, O Lord, and great shall be the company of them that publish it; and so let thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Accept, O Lord, our praises, and hear our prayers, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

## SERMON LIV.—*Parable of the Sower.*

ALMIGHTY God, we esteem thy word as one of thy choicest gifts, and one for which we must give an account to thee in the day of judgment. Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise *hear* them; read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

We desire to take heed *how* we hear. We would dread the thoughts of being *way-side* hearers,—care-

less and inattentive. Nor let us be merely *temporary* professors,—satisfied with transient emotions of our passions, but without root or depth of earth. Preserve us also from being *worldly-minded* hearers of the word, in whom the good seed is choked by anxious cares, or deceitful riches; but may the blessed word find a place in our hearts, as in good ground. May we understand it!—may we receive it!—may we retain it!—and, not being forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, may we practise it, and bring forth abundantly the fruits of temperance, piety, and benevolence, to the glory of thy holy name, through Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate! Amen.

### SERMON LV.—*Conversion of Lydia.*

GOD of all grace, who, in ancient time, didst, by the power of thy Holy Spirit, open the heart of Lydia to receive the word preached by thy faithful apostle Paul, grant that, by the same gentle and divine influence, our hearts, which, by reason of our depraved nature, are shut against thy Gospel, may be prepared, disposed, and enabled to receive the truth as it is in Jesus. We thank thee, O God, that unto us is the word of this salvation sent. Thou hast showed thy word unto Britain—thy judgments unto England. Thou hast not dealt so with every nation. We praise thee, O Lord!—and being thus highly-favoured, may we regard the gospel-message with the most candid, serious, devout, diligent, believing, joyful, and practical attention; lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives, that so, like Lydia, we may prove ourselves faithful to the Lord, openly espouse his cause, and encourage his ministers, and with our whole household, serve the Lord. Bestow upon us this grace, we humbly beseech thee, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

### SERMON LVI.—*The Carnal Mind.*

HOLY, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, against whom we have greatly sinned, and who for our sins art most justly displeased! Thou hast revealed thy wrath from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and thou hast declared that except we repent we shall all perish. Grant unto us, O

Lord, we beseech thee, repentance unto salvation. We confess before thee, not only our actual transgressions, but the sinfulness of our hearts, from which they flowed. Our minds are indeed, by nature, miserably carnal, minding only the things of the flesh;—our understanding is carnal, ignorant of the things of the Spirit;—our will is carnal, opposed to thy will, and not subject to thy law;—and our affections are carnal, being set only upon worldly objects and enjoyments; and we confess with shame and grief that this carnal mind is enmity against thee,—against thy glorious perfections, thy spiritual worship, thy holy laws, and thy redeemed people; but suffer none of us, O God, to remain under the power and curse of such a carnal mind. May we all be born again,—born of the Spirit, that we may possess a spiritual mind, and regard the things of the Spirit; and may we now so sow unto the Spirit, that we may finally of the Spirit reap life everlasting, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour! Amen.

## SERMON LVII.—*Martha and Mary.*

BLESSED God, thou who didst make man, best knowest what is good for man; and thou hast, in great mercy, made it known to us. Thou hast shown us, in thy word, what is the one thing needful, even the care of the soul, with a view to its eternal salvation. O help us practically to regard this! Let not the cares of this world, however necessary, nor its pleasures, however lawful, prevent our first and chief regard to religion; but may we, like Mary, who sat at our Saviour's feet, pay the most diligent attention to the word of salvation in the Gospel! May we hear it with reverence,—read it with seriousness,—be instant in prayer; and, above all, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is able to save us from our sins. We rejoice to think that the good part shall never be taken away from those who have, by thy grace, been enabled to choose it. Worldly pleasures perish in the using,—health, wealth, honour, and life itself, are transitory; but nothing shall separate believers from the word of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Having this portion,

we will not envy sinners,—we will not blush at being thought religious; but glory in our choice, while we ascribe all honour to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the God of our salvation. Amen.

### SERMON LVIII.—*Religion or Ruin.*

HOLY Father, suffer us not to deceive ourselves, with regard to the true nature and dreadful consequences of sin. Sin is deceitful, Satan is deceitful, and our own hearts are deceitful; but let us not be deceived, by any means; but fully believe the declaration of thy word,—That sin is ruinous to the souls of men. It has ruined millions, who are now in Hell; and it is ruining millions on earth, who are in the broad road to destruction. May we take warning, and immediately fly from the wrath to come!—and we bless thy name, O God, that thou hast directed us whither to fly,—even to thy dear Son, the only Refuge, the great Deliverer from the wrath to come. May we repent of all our past follies, and with weeping and supplication come to thee, through Jesus Christ, for mercy and grace;—mercy to pardon all the past, and grace to help us in time to come.

Have mercy, we beseech thee, O God, on self-deceived sinners. Open their eyes to discover their danger. Show them the folly and madness of their sinful course,—of their vanity, carnality, and unbelief; and may they seek thee whilst thou mayest be found, and call upon thee while thou art near, that so iniquity may not be their ruin; and may we, who have escaped the snare, and have believed through grace, ever shun the appearance of evil, and live in holy love and cheerful obedience to our glorious Redeemer, who, with the Father and Holy Ghost, is one God over all, blessed for ever! Amen.

### SERMON LIX.—*Lot's Deliverance.*

ALMIGHTY God, who, in all ages, hast manifested to the world thy love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, enable us to learn, from what we have now heard, what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against thee. Let thy terrible judgments which fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah, prove a warning to us and to

others; and dreadful as their ruin was, let us fear lest a worse thing should come upon us; for, surely, considering our superior privileges, it will be more tolerable for the inhabitants of those cities in the day of judgment than for us, if we continue to provoke thee by our sins. Thou art now saying to us by thy word, Escape for your lives, look not behind you, linger not in the plain, but flee to the mountain. O that we may obey thy gracious voice, and, without a moment's delay, flee to the Saviour, and take refuge in him, the only hope set before us. There shall we be safe, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: and, O that we may remember Lot's wife,—so remember her as not to look back,—not to long after the world, its vanities and its pleasures, lest we, like her, should be consumed! But being delivered by thy grace, may we be kept from all sin; be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation! Amen.

SERMON LX.—*Irresolution Reproved.*

O MOST merciful and blessed God, thy service is perfect freedom, and all thy ways are peace and pleasure. Shall we then hesitate a moment whether to serve thee or not? Can sin, with all its enchantments,—can the world, with all its allurements, offer any thing equal to thy great salvation,—to pardon, peace, holiness, and Heaven? O God, to whom can we repair but unto thee; for thou only hast the words of eternal life; and dare we yet delay? Shall we still cry out, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep?" Awaken us, O our God, lest we sleep the sleep of death. O Lord, save us from ourselves!—save us from the deceitfulness of sin!—save us from evil companions, save us from the snares of the Devil! Suffer us to trifle no longer,—no longer to halt between two opinions; and whatever be the consequence, whatever reproach may assail us, whatever afflictions may await us, whatever sacrifices we are called to make, help us now, by thy Holy Spirit, to choose the good part which shall never be taken from us. Help us now to say, The Lord, he is the God,—the Lord he is the God; and whatever others do, we will serve the Lord. Be it so, for Jesus's sake. Amen.

### SERMON LXI.—*Sin Dethroned.*

MOST holy God, how awful is the state of man by nature! We confess, with shame, that sin has usurped the dominion over the whole human race. Sin, like a mighty monarch, hath reigned over all the children of Adam;—sin hath reigned in our mortal bodies, so that we have obeyed the lusts thereof:—sin hath awfully abounded, and threatened to reign unto death!—but grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that sin may no longer have dominion over us. We rejoice that Jesus Christ hath come into the world, not only to deliver us from the guilt of sin, but also from its power; that what the law could never do, in that it was weak through the flesh, the Son of God hath effected, by shedding his precious blood, that so, all who believe, might be made free from the law of sin and death. We rejoice that we are now not under the law, but under grace; and that the Gospel affords every advantage we can desire to deliver us from the bondage of sin. O give us thy Holy Spirit, that, through his grace, we may mortify the deeds of the body; and that, being constrained by the love of Christ, we may depart from all iniquity. May our hearts be purified by faith, that now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we may have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### SERMON LXII.—*Universal Holiness.*

O GOD, who art glorious in holiness, thou hast said unto us, Be ye holy, for I am holy. Holiness, O Lord, becometh thy house; and it is thy royal will and pleasure that all who name the name of Christ should depart from iniquity. O God of peace, be pleased, by thy Spirit, to sanctify us wholly! and may our whole spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! Teach us to love thee supremely, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. May we love thy law, thy house, thy worship, thy people! and may we manifest the influence of Christian principles in our own houses, in our families, and in all the concerns of social life! As parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and ser-

vants, may we adorn and recommend the doctrine of Christ! Let holiness to the Lord be our maxim in the church, in the family, and in the world;—may all we have and are be devoted to the Lord! and knowing that we are not our own, but bought with a price, may we not live to ourselves, but to the Lord; and glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are the Lord's. Thus may we proceed, looking to Jesus, and so beholding his glory, as to be gradually transformed into his image, until we arrive in Heaven, to be with him where he is, to see him as he is, and to be perfectly like him for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON LXIII.—*Good Hope, through Grace.*

O THOU God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that so we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. May we possess the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ, who is our hope, our only hope! In ourselves as sinners, we are hopeless and helpless; but, blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, the true Foundation,—on him alone would we build, gladly renouncing all confidence in the flesh! May our hope be a *good hope*,—a hope derived from grace alone! O let us not deceive ourselves with a vain presumptuous hope,—the hope of the hypocrite and the formalist, which will fail them at the last; but may Christ be our hope,—Christ in and with us, the hope of glory!—and may this hope make us patient in the day of adversity, so that we may account all our sufferings light and momentary, when compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, reserved in Heaven for us. Having this hope, may we be purified from all defilements of flesh and spirit, be active in duty, firm in temptation, and patient in affliction! and O, that we may experience its cordial support, when heart and flesh are failing, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! Amen.

SERMON LXIV.—*Looking unto Jesus.*

BLESSED God, thou hast set before us in thy word Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, and our gracious Saviour. Open our eyes and incline our hearts to behold the Lamb of God. Turn away our eyes from

beholding the perishable vanities of this evil world; and may they be fixed on this greatest and best object of confidence and affection!

Are there any of us who are living without Christ? who see no beauty or comeliness in him?—who refuse to hear his voice, to read his word, and to come to him that they may have life? O convince them of their sin and of their danger! May they now, by faith, behold the Lamb, lest, having neglected the great salvation, they shall dread his appearance, the second time, to judgment!

Ever keep us, while in this world, looking to Jesus, that we may maintain peace in our consciences; that we may walk humbly with our God: that we may be patient in tribulation; that we may sincerely love God and our neighbour; that we may be crucified to the world; and, at last, have hope in our death, expecting, in a better state, to see him as he is, and to be for ever with the Lord! Amen.

SERMON LXV.—*The Happiness of being with Christ.*

GLORIOUS Intercessor! blessed Advocate of sinners, who hast entered into the presence of God for us, we adore thee for that specimen of thy intercession which we have now been hearing. We are thine, gracious Lord, given to thee by the Father: and we learn that it is thy holy will that we shall be with thee, where thou art,—for indeed this is not our rest: and thou knowest that we cannot be completely happy in this sinful and miserable world: but we are well assured that to be with thee, to see thee as thou art, to be conformed to thy image, and to behold the splendour of thy mediatorial glory, will render us perfectly blessed. O prepare us, by thy Spirit, for the heavenly world! Enable each of us to say, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Here may we love and serve thee with all our hearts; and when we close our eyes upon the fading glories of Earth, may we open them in the celestial Paradise, to behold, with unveiled face, the glories of the Lamb, who sits in the midst of the throne; to whom, with the Father of mercies, and the Spirit of all grace, be glory, honour, and thanksgiving, for evermore! Amen.

# VOL. VI.

## SERMON LXVI.

### *The Importance of the Knowledge of God.*

ALMIGHTY God, the Father of Lights, and Fountain of all Wisdom, give us, we pray thee, thy Holy Spirit; the great and promised Teacher, to lead us into all truth; and especially that we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. We thank thee that the true light shineth around us. O let it shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. May this knowledge deeply humble us; may it lead us to trust only, and to trust confidently, on the Saviour: may we supremely love thee, worship thee in spirit and in truth, and practically prove that the truth is in us, by departing from all evil, and keeping thy holy commandments; and may we finally be admitted to that world of light, where we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face; and so learn, by happy experience, the full meaning of the text,—This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent: to whom, with the Holy Spirit, be glory and honour, for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXVII.—*The Power of God.*

GLORIOUS Jehovah! Thou only art Almighty; thou canst do every thing. We desire to acknowledge and glorify thee, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Thou also art the Preserver and Governor of all thy creatures. The innumerable tribes of beings which inhabit the air, the earth, and the water, these all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their food in due season. Thou also art the Ruler of the moral world; angels and men, yea devils, are under thy controul; all human hearts are in thy hand, and thy throne ruleth over all. But while we bless thee for

our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, we would, above all, adore and praise thee for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ: we rejoice that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost; may we be saved from wrath through him; may we be delivered from the dominion of sin; may we be preserved from the wiles of the Devil; and kept, by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,—unto him be glory in the church, by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

## SERMON LXVIII.—*The Wisdom of God.*

O THOU that dwellest in the Heavens, thou art God, only wise; thy understanding is infinite: we behold it in the works of thy hands; in wisdom hast thou made them all; and when all were finished, thou didst pronounce them all to be very good. We adore thy wisdom as it appears in all thy creatures, and we will praise thee especially on our own account, for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. By thee, O God, the universe is preserved and governed; and without thee, neither an empire rises nor a sparrow falls. All the affairs of mankind are under thy direction and controul; even the wrath of man is made to praise thee, while the remainder thereof is mercifully restrained. But in the salvation of sinful men, by Jesus Christ, we discern the manifold wisdom of God; we behold it in the person of the Saviour, uniting in himself the two natures, human and divine; and glorifying in his mediatorial work, both justice and mercy, that God might be just, while justifying the ungodly.

We adore thy wisdom, O God, though we can never fully comprehend it. We entreat wisdom from thee to direct us in all our ways, and especially to make us wise to salvation; and with humble confidence we would rely on thy wisdom, and trust in thee at all times; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him. Now to God, only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.

### SERMON LXIX.—*The Holiness of God.*

HOLY, holy, holy art thou, O Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of thy glory! But O, how shall sinful man approach thee, for thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity! Shame and confusion of face belong unto us; for behold we are vile, we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

Thou, O God, didst make man holy; thy law is holy; thy judgments pronounced and executed upon rebel angels and fallen men, and the chastisements of thy people, all evince thy holiness; but we behold it in the most awful manner on Calvary, when it pleased thee to bruise thy dear Son, and make our iniquities meet upon him, that, by his stripes, we might be healed. And blessed be thy name, that through his death, we have now boldness to enter into the holiest of all, and may draw near to thee, as our heavenly Father. And now, we beseech thee to give us, according to thy gracious promise, thy Holy Spirit, that by his effectual working we may be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit; and thus be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and being changed into thy holy image, from glory to glory, we may be for ever with and like our Lord; who, with the Father and Holy Ghost, is one God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

### SERMON LXX.—*The Justice of God.*

RIGHTEOUS Father! great and marvellous are all thy works; just and true are all thy ways. In all ages thou hast displayed thy justice. Rebel angels were excluded from Heaven; man was expelled from Paradise; the Deluge destroyed the world of the ungodly; Sodom was destroyed by fire; thine ancient people were often sorely chastised for their backslidings; and to this day, thy providence often proves that there is a God who judgeth on the earth. Above all, was thy awful justice displayed, when thy own Son was made an offering for sin; when thou didst condemn sin, in the person of our Surety, that the righteousness of the law, which we had broken, might be fulfilled for us; that so God might appear to the whole universe a just

God, while a Saviour. And now we would rejoice, Holy Father, in thy gracious declaration, that if we confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Blessed God, enable us to imitate thy justice: may we render to all their dues; knowing that to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to thee than sacrifice; and may we humbly expect that, when we have finished our course, we shall receive that crown of righteousness which God, the righteous Judge, shall give unto all his people in the glorious day of his appearing.

SERMON LXXI.—*The Omnipresence of God.*

ALL-SEEING God! we believe that thou art everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good. It is in vain to hide ourselves from thee, for there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Wherever we are, thou God seest us: we would, therefore, stand in awe of thee, and sin not.

Blessed God, it is the consolation of thy people that thou art ever with them. Thou beholdest us, whether in the church, or in the closet, or in the world. May it be our concern to approve ourselves to thee, that thou, who seest in secret, may reward us openly. We rejoice to think that in the hour of affliction thine eye, the eye of a Father, beholds us, and that thou art a very present help in the time of trouble. Thou hast graciously said, "When thou passest through the water I will be with thee; and when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt." We desire, therefore, to take courage, humbly trusting that thou wilt never leave us nor forsake us. And, at the close of life, enable each of us in faith to say—Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Hear these our petitions, most merciful Father, for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON LXXII.—*The Patience of God.*

O LORD our God, thou art indeed merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; we adore the riches of thy patience and

forbearance. The whole world lieth in wickedness, and thou knowest that the sinfulness of man is great in the earth; and although thou art angry with the wicked every day, and hast declared, that except men repent they shall certainly perish, yet thou art slow to anger; thou givest men many kind warnings, and allowest much time and space for repentance. And instead of dealing with us according to our sins, thou art constantly following us with goodness and mercy. O that thy goodness may lead us to repentance! Suffer none of us to abuse thy patience, and so treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, but may our hearts be melted by thy kindness, so that we may seek and obtain both thy pardoning mercy and renewing grace. And O, that those who have obtained mercy, may show mercy to others; possess their own souls in patience; forbearing one another in love, and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven them!

SERMON LXXIII.—*The Sovereignty of God.*

O THOU great Supreme! thou art the Former and the Possessor of Heaven and of Earth; infinitely wise, infinitely righteous, infinitely good! Thou art the sovereign Ruler of the world, and hast a right to dispose of all creatures and things according to thy good pleasure. Thou art the Judge of all the Earth, and always doest that which is right. Teach us, O Lord, humbly to submit to thy holy will in all thy dispensations, even when they are most afflictive. In every trouble may we be still, and know that thou art God. Make us content to receive not good only at thy sovereign hand, but evil also: and to say, when deprived of what we loved and valued, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. And O that we may entertain the most grateful thoughts of thy undeserved goodness, and especially of thy grace! We bless thee, that to us is the word of salvation sent, while millions remain destitute of it; and if thou hast also given us thy Holy Spirit, and caused us to taste that thou art gracious, we ascribe it to thy sovereign and distinguishing mercy. Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON LXXIV.—*The Goodness of God.*

O GOD! thou art good: there is none good but thee; for thou only art infinitely, originally, perfectly, immutably good. Thou art good and doest good; Heaven and Earth are full of thy goodness. Man, especially largely partakes of thy kindness,—in his original formation, in the powers of his body and mind, in the ample provision made for his support and comfort, in his deliverance from innumerable evils, and his enjoyment of innumerable blessings. Above all, thy goodness is displayed in the gift of thy dear Son, and in our redemption through his blood. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! O God, we desire to feel our hearts attracted by thy love, and effectually drawn to adore, love, obey, and trust in thee, through Jesus Christ. And O that, having tasted of thy goodness to us, we may imitate it in our conduct to others. May we do good to all, even to our enemies; and, above all, to the household of faith; so shall we prove ourselves to be the children of thee, our Father who art in heaven; so shall we hope fully and for ever to feast upon thy goodness in glory. Grant this, O Lord, we beseech thee, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SERMON LXXV.—*The Mercy of God.*

UNTO thee, O Lord our God, belongeth mercy; Thou art the Father of mercies; thou keepest mercy for thousands, thou delightest in mercy. Therefore are we encouraged to come to the throne of thy grace, to obtain mercy through Jesus Christ, the chief mercy promised to the fathers, and whom thou hast set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. We greatly rejoice that in Jesus mercy and truth meet together; thou art just without impairing the honour of thy mercy, and merciful without invading the rights of thy justice. May the holy and blessed Spirit manifest to us the riches of thy mercy, in its sovereignty, its abundance, its efficacy, its comprehensiveness, and in its perpetuity, for thy mercy endureth for ever.

O that sinners, who so much need thy mercy, may be sensible of their need. May the wicked forsake his way, and turn to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him; even to thee, O God, who will abundantly pardon. And may we, who have obtained mercy, and who are less than the least of all thy mercies, abound in praise, and offer continually the sacrifice of thanksgiving, through Jesus Christ: to whom with the Father and Holy Ghost be everlasting praises. Amen.

### SERMON LXXVI.—*The Love of God.*

O LORD our God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth,—especially thy new, best name of LOVE; and thanks for ever be to thee, if we have known and believed the love that thou hast unto us. God is Love. Glory be to thee for this declaration of thy nature in thy name. May the Holy Spirit shed abroad thy love in our hearts. We are amazed at the love of God, in Christ, to sinners of mankind! we survey, with astonishment, the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of this stupendous love, which surpasseth all human conception! We behold, with delight, the proofs of thy love in the unspeakable gift of thy only begotten Son; in the gift of thy word; in the gift of thy Spirit; in the pardon of our sins, in all our temporal and spiritual comforts, and in the promise and earnest of eternal glory. O give us to know that we are the object of thy love; and may we, in return, love thee our God and Saviour supremely, and prove the sincerity of our love, by love to thy people and obedience to thy commandments; and this we beg for the alone sake of Jesus Christ the righteous. Amen.

### SERMON LXXVII.—*The Faithfulness of God.*

O GOD of Truth, thou art without iniquity; just and right art thou. Thou art not a man that thou shouldest lie, nor the Son of man, that thou shouldest repent. Hast thou said, and shalt thou not do it? or hast thou spoken, and shalt thou not make it good? Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief! All thy promises in Christ are Yea and Amen. In all ages

thy people have experienced the truth of thy word; they trusted in thee, and were not ashamed; not one thing failed, of all the good things which were spoken concerning them; all came to pass. And thou, O God, art unchangeably the same; we, therefore, would judge that thou art faithful, and humbly plead that thou wilt do as thou hast said, and fulfil to us thy servants, the word on which thou has caused us to hope. And to thee shall be the praise and glory of thy truth and faithfulness, through eternal ages. Amen.

SERMON LXXVIII.—*God, our God.*

GLORIOUS God, when we contemplate thy Divine perfections, we are filled with admiration; but when we consider the great promise of the New Covenant, that thou wilt be *our* God, and that we shall be *thy* people, we are beyond measure astonished. And will God in very deed condescend to be our God? Wilt thou write thy laws in our minds? wilt thou walk in us, and dwell with us; be merciful to our unrighteousness, and remember our sins no more? O Lord, fulfil to us all these precious promises. Let thy power protect us, thy wisdom conduct us, thy holiness sanctify us, thy justice secure us, thy omnipresence surround us, thy patience bear with us, thy sovereignty rule us, thy goodness enrich us, thy mercy forgive us, thy love delight us, and thy faithfulness crown the whole, in our final eternal salvation. O God, what can we render unto thee for benefits so vast, so unspeakable! We yield ourselves, body, soul, and spirit to thee; desiring to adore, obey, and glorify thee as our God, and to say from our hearts, Whom have we in Heaven but thee, and there is none on earth we desire beside thee; this God is our God for ever and ever: thou wilt be our guide, even unto death! Amen and Amen.

# VOL. VII.

## SERMON LXXIX.

### *Christ, the incomparable Teacher.*

WE praise thee, O Lord, that thou hast manifested thyself in Christ, not only that our sins might be forgiven, but that we might be made wise unto salvation. To know thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, is everlasting life. Thy works around us, and thy dealing with us, would leave us, and all mankind, without excuse for ignorance of thee: but we bless thee that thou hast moreover revealed thy will by the prophets of old; and in the fulness of time, by thine only Son, who alone completely knew thee, and therefore could fully make thee known to us. Accept our thanksgivings, that thou hast recorded his doctrine, his actions, his sufferings, and his glory, for our instruction, to the end of the world. We praise thee, that thy word is so bountifully put into our hands, is read and explained to us, and is urged upon our attention and our affections. Save us, O Lord, from shutting our eyes lest we should see; from stopping our ears lest we should hear, and hardening our hearts lest we should be converted, and thou should heal us! Grant us, O Lord, the teaching of thy Holy Spirit, which thou hast promised to them who ask thee; and work in us, both to will and to do what thou teachest us, for the sake of Jesus, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXX.—*Christ, the Great Physician.*

MAY we worship thee, O Lord, in spirit; and call upon thee in truth! May we duly reflect on our real condition before thee, as polluted in our nature, depraved in our habits, guilty of wilful neglect and transgression of thy commands, fit only for endless misery, and every moment hastening to it, unless thou preventest us by thy grace, as revealed by Jesus Christ to the chief of sinners. Blessed be thy name, O Lord, who pardonest all our iniquities, and healest our desperate diseases. We have done the things that we need not, and ought not to have done; and have not

done what we might, and ought to have done. In us there is no health; the head is sick, the heart is faint, the body is covered with putrifying sores. Lord save us, or we perish; we all perish now, and for ever! Blessed be the Son of God, who with infinite wisdom and compassion came to save us when lost, by taking on himself the load of our infirmities; and bearing, together with these, the burden of our sins. Grant for his sake, O our heavenly Father, thy Holy Spirit to enlighten us, lest we close our eyes in everlasting death! that we may look to Jesus and be healed, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, world without end. Amen.

SERMON LXXXI.—*Following the Lord fully.*

IN thy service, O Lord, is perfect freedom; and by thy guidance alone we can be directed in perfect safety, to obtain everlasting bliss and glory. We confess, and would deeply lament, that we have followed the devices and desires of our own hearts, instead of thy holy, just, and good commands. Even though we have professed to follow thee, how deficient and inconstant has been our obedience! Justly mayest thou reject our services and reply to us, Who hath required this at your hands? But with thee, O Lord, is forgiveness; with thee there is plenteous redemption. May the time past suffice for us to have deceived ourselves, by pretending to serve thee, together with our idols of worldly pleasure, interest, or honour. When tempted by these to draw back from following thee, may we remember, that he who loveth the things of the world, hath not the love of God in him. May we fear to offend thee, and fear nothing else. May we love thee with all our heart and mind; and so follow thee, as children follow their much-loved parents. Thou art able to do for those who love thee, more than we can ask or think; and thou hast laid up for all who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, more than ever entered the heart of man to conceive. Grant us thy Spirit, to overcome the world, to preserve us from falling, and to present us blameless before thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON LXXXII.—*The Pearl of Great Price.*

THANKS be to God for the unspeakable gift of salvation! We bless thee, O Lord, that thou hast so loved our world as to send into it thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. With him thou freely givest to us all things richly to enjoy. On them who walk uprightly, thou bestowest, for his sake, grace and glory; and withholdest from them nothing that is good. While many say, Who will shew us any good! O Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. That shall rejoice us more than all increase of earthly enjoyments. May we then pass on toward the mark to obtain the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. May we lay aside every incumbrance, and our most easily besetting sins, that we may persevere in our race, looking unto Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured the pain and the disgrace of the cross. May we choose for our portion that inestimable treasure, which every one that seeketh findeth, and which alone can ensure to us everlasting satisfaction. May we count all things lost for Christ; that living and dying he may be our gain; our life, our peace, our joy unspeakable, even now; and our glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIII.—*Sinners Self-Destroyers.*

THY word, O Lord, is truth. Just and holy are thy ways, thou King of Saints. Awful is our condition in thy sight: may it be duly so in ours! We are all lost creatures. Naturally at enmity with thee; nothing but a conviction of our desperate state can excite us to seek thy mercy, or to submit to thy righteousness. Sin hath been our choice, and its end can only be our destruction. Helpless in ourselves, hopeless from others, unless thou help us, Almighty God, we must eternally perish. But in thee is our help, for thou art light and love. Thou hast provided salvation for every one who seeks to be graciously received, and freely loved by thee. Thou art in Christ reconciling the world to thyself, not imputing to us our aggravated guilt; but

sending thy messengers to intreat us in Christ's stead, that we would be reconciled to thee. Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief, and glorify thy grace in us the chief of sinners, by granting us thy Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake; to whom be everlasting praise and glory. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIV.—*The unprofitable Servant.*

To thee, our Lord, we are, and must ever be, unprofitable servants. By us thou canst gain nothing; we receive every thing from thee. What can our utmost love and zeal render to thee, that is not our duty as thy dependent creatures? But, alas! instead of being faithful, we have been slothful servants: nay, instead of servants, we have been rebels and traitors against thee. And wilt thou receive such wretches into thy family? Canst thou accept us, not as servants, but as children, and as heirs? Yea, as joint heirs with Jesus Christ! So unsearchable is thy grace in him, that thou wouldst not be faithful and just to thy word, didst thou not forgive them who confess their sins before thee. O cleanse us, then, from all unrighteousness!—fit us for thy holy service, and vouchsafe to employ us in it. Impart the Spirit of thy Son to our hearts, that we may cry Abba, Father! Against thee have we rebelled; to others we have been injurious: henceforth, O Lord, may we be devoted to thy praise, who callest us from darkness to marvellous light; and may we prove our gratitude for thine unmerited and abounding mercy, by aiming to be profitable to others, and especially to the household of Christ. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXV.—*Superabounding Grace.*

AMIDST abounding sin, how could we, O Lord, presume to call upon thee, if thy word did not assure us that thy grace still more abounds. To sin alone we can attribute the evils under which all creation groans. Thou hast warned us also of a world, in which sin abounds unspeakably more than in this: a world where grace is *not* proclaimed as it is to us. Blessed be thy name, that we are yet exhorted to flee from that state of wrath to which every sin that we commit

brings us nearer. May we flee, before it is too late, to lay hold for hope on the refuge that is set before us by the Gospel of our gracious Redeemer! We praise thee that thou hast laid our help on one who is mightier to save than all our enemies are to destroy. When our first parents involved all their posterity in corruption and death, thou, O God and Saviour, tookest on thyself our redemption. Thou savest us, not only from our natural pollution, but from all our acquired depravity,—all the guilt of our numberless and aggravated offences. Thou restorest us from the grave, not to an earthly Paradise, but to a heavenly and unchangeable inheritance! Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON LXXXVI.—*Jerusalem lamented.*

HOW merciful, O Lord, are the most awful warnings of thy judgments! The tears of Jesus over impenitent Jerusalem demonstrate thy pity towards self-destroying sinners. When the Heathen Ninevites relented at thy threatenings, thou sparedst them. Had the Jews repented when Jesus wept, what joy had there been in Heaven! From the woes to which their hardness of heart exposed them, may we learn wisdom unto salvation! O that the things which make for our peace, that have been addressed to our understandings, may not now be shut out from our hearts by unbelief, worldly-mindedness, or self-conceit! Thou art still calling Jews to repentance;—thou art bringing idolatrous barbarians to know and love thee. From the east and the west, from the north and the south, multitudes press into thy kingdom. Let us not still refuse or delay to enter while there is room, lest it be worse for us than for Heathens or for Jews. Now to him who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, be everlasting praise! Amen.

SERMON LXXXVII.—*The Attraction of the Cross.*

O LORD, how justly, ere now, mightest thou have driven each of us to that everlasting punishment which thou preparedst for Satan and his angels! Yet still

thou art drawing us by the bands of affection to serve thee. Thy tender mercy, which is over all thy works, still invites all mankind to seek thee, if haply they may find thee, even without the guidance of thy word. With us, all thy dealings have been suited to draw us to thyself; but, above all, thy Gospel, in which Jesus is set forth to us as suffering for our sins, rising again for our justification, and ascending to thy right hand, that he might bestow on men the best of gifts, even repentance and remission of sins. Herein indeed is love, that he died for us as sinners, as enemies, not as friends of God. How dreadful must be our state, that nothing less could redeem us than the precious blood of Christ! May *his* love constrain us, who, when all were dead, submitted to death for all, that they who live might not live to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive blessing and glory! Amen.

SERMON LXXXVIII.—*Baptism not Regeneration.*

ACCEPT our thanks, O Lord, that we have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! We praise thee for this solemn pledge of our instructions in all these things that thou hast commanded, and for every advantage we have enjoyed in connexion with so great a privilege. We thank thee for every outward sign and memorial of thy grace to polluted and guilty creatures! Pardon our unprofitableness and unfaithfulness in the use of them! Preserve us from abusing them to the neglect, and even to the denial, of those spiritual benefits, to the pursuit of which they increase our obligation. Having been cleansed with water, in thy sacred name, may we the more earnestly seek for that purity of mind, without which none can see God! Create in us a clean heart, O God!—renew a right spirit within us; and to thee, the only true God, Father, Son, and Spirit, be the glory for ever! Amen.

SERMON LXXXIX.—*Invocation of Christ.*

O LORD, who didst vouchsafe, though God over all, blessed for evermore, to manifest thyself in our nature,

we would call upon thy name, at once with reverence and godly fear, and with holy boldness and love. With them who had not seen thee, may we love thee;—with them who no longer saw thee, may we rejoice in thee, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Though we cannot, like thy first disciples, inquire of thee, as our Teacher, whatever we desire to know, or ask thee in person for what we need, thou hast assured us, with them, that whatsoever we ask the Father, in thy name, thou wilt bestow! Thou sympathizest still with our infirmities, thou knowest all our temptations;—ever be with us, O Lord, and bring us, feeble and worthless as we are, to see and to partake of thy glory. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us, and with all who, in every place, call upon the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, both theirs and ours! Amen.

## SERMON XC.—*The Spiritual Resurrection.*

THOU knowest, O Lord, what is in man!—thou gavest him not only animal, but spiritual life:—but he forfeited both, and lost the knowledge of that good which thou hadst conferred upon him, rather than abstain from the knowledge of evil, which thou hadst forbidden to him; but while our first parents, and all their posterity, thus became dead to thee, how greatly hast thou magnified thy grace, through Jesus Christ, the Light and the Life of men! We confess, and we deplore, that although alive to our sensual appetites and worldly interests, we are naturally dead to thee, our only source of safety and happiness. If alive to the terrors of thy wrath, we are still dead to the attractions of thy love, till thou impartest thy Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds to discern thy glory and thy grace. Draw us, O heavenly Father, by thy judgments and thy mercies, till, convinced of our death-like state, we may hearken to the gracious voice of thy Son, and live—not to ourselves, but to him; so, when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, may we rise, not as some, to shame, and everlasting contempt,—but to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

SERMON XCI.—*The Practical Knowledge of Christ.*

O LORD, who madest all things good, what misery hath sin brought upon mankind! The abodes of them who have not heard of Christ are habitations of cruelty, lust, and loathsome idolatry. Behold them with pity, gracious God, offering each other victims to devils, murdering their infants, torturing their own limbs, abandoned to unnatural crimes, and glutting their appetites with human flesh and blood! Such were our ancestors, till they were taught the truth as it is in Christ;—such might we still have been, but that to us the word of salvation is sent; but, alas! how are crimes yet multiplied among us; and of how many who are deterred from ruinous vices, how plain is it that they have not the love of God in them; but are still lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God! How many even turn the grace of God to licentiousness! Preserve us, Lord, from doing so. May we so hear thy word, so learn the truth in Christ, as to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,—living soberly, justly, and piously in this present world,—waiting for his appearance, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever! Amen.

# VOL. VIII.

SERMON XCI.—*The Happy Believer.*

O GOD of our salvation, the God of all comfort, great is thy goodness to sinful man; for although he be born to trouble, and liable to various miseries in the present world, as well as to misery eternal in the world to come, yet art thou pleased, of thy infinite mercy and goodness, to provide for his happiness here on earth. Glory be to thy name, that we have heard and known the joyful sound of the Gospel,—

the glad tidings of great joy to all people,—that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners!—and as the joy of thy salvation is received only by faith, O thou Author and Finisher of that precious grace, give unto us joy and peace in believing. Cordially crediting thy testimony concerning Jesus Christ, and the promises made to all who believe in him, may we trust and not be afraid; but relying upon thy divine faithfulness, may we fully expect that not one thing, of all the good things which thou hast spoken, shall fail: thus being strong in faith, and thus giving glory to God, may we be blessed, with the blessed Mother of our Lord!—happily persuaded, like her, that there shall be a performance of thy holy word, and that thou wilt do as thou hast said.

## SERMON XCII.—*The Doctrine of Providence.*

O THOU Preserver of men, we believe that thou art the righteous Governor of the world, and that thou art in every place, beholding the evil and the good! We believe that thou art the Ruler among the nations, and dost govern the churches of thy saints; art present in the families of thy people, and dost notice the humblest individuals. Thy providence, which is absolutely sovereign, and sometimes mysterious, is always wise and good. We desire to stand in awe of thee, and seek thy favour in Jesus with our whole heart;—we rejoice that the reins of universal government are in the hands of God our Saviour, therefore, O Lord of Hosts, thy servants have found in their hearts to pray this prayer unto thee. To thee, as the God of providence, we offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, for hitherto thou hast helped us. To thee, O sovereign Disposer of human affairs, we desire at all times to submit, and to cast all our cares upon thee, humbly believing that thou carest for us: and, however dark and mysterious some of thy proceedings may appear, we hope for the season which shall clear up all, and prove to thy glory and our joy, that thou hast done all things well. To thee, O Lord, be the glory of Creation, Providence, and Grace, through Jesus Christ our Saviour! Amen.

SERMON XCIII.

*Christ our Wisdom, Righteousness, &c.*

ALMIGHTY God, we humbly confess before thee, that as fallen and corrupt creatures, we are destitute of true wisdom, and are totally unrighteous and unholy; but, glory be to thy great name that Jesus Christ is made to every believer wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. Blessed God, make us, we beseech thee, wise unto salvation. Impute to us the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the righteous one; and purify our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we may be sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit. May we be conformed to the image of the holy Saviour, that the mind which was in him may be also in us, and that we may walk even as he walked!—And as these bodies of sin are doomed to the grave, and must see corruption, grant us, O God, a share in the first resurrection, that even these vile bodies may, in the day of redemption, be made like unto the glorious body of the Son of God, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. To the gracious Redeemer, to the Father of mercies, and to the Spirit of holiness,—the Three-One God of our Salvation, be everlasting praises! Amen.

SERMON XCIV.—*Samson's Riddle.*

GREAT Ruler of the world, thou dost all things well! Thy way is sometimes in the sea, and thy path cannot be traced; but all thy paths are mercy and truth to thy people! Thou bringest good out of evil; and they that sow in tears are enabled to reap in joy. Thou knowest how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and render them, by their trials, more watchful and humble. Thou makest the poor of the flock rich in faith, and causest them to trust in the name of the Lord. Bodily suffering, domestic trials, world losses, and persecution for righteousness' sake, are all made to work together for the good of thy children; and even Death itself shall prove their richest gain. O God, we adore thy wisdom and kindness, in thus bringing good out of evil; and we desire to learn to trust in thee at all times. We would commit all our concerns

into thy hands, and cast all our cares upon thee, happy in believing that thou carest for us. We would be anxiously careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgivings, make known our requests unto thee. To thee, O Lord, be all glory and praise, world without end! Amen.

SERMON XCV.—*The Profitable Journey.*

ETERNAL God, we, thy sinful and unworthy creatures, are but pilgrims and travellers in the present world. Here we have no continuing city, but we desire to seek that which is above. We learn from thy holy word, that thou hast spoken good concerning Israel,—good things *here*, even pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb; and better things hereafter, even fulness of joy at thy right hand, and pleasures for evermore! Give us, O Lord, we beseech thee, that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, that so we may forsake the vanities of this world, and earnestly seek the things that are above!—and enable us, we pray thee, to use our best endeavours to persuade others to go with us;—make them willing in the day of thy power, and induce them to say We *will* go with you, for God is with you.—Grant this, O God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

SERMON XCVI.—*The Water and the Blood.*

HOLY Father, we humbly confess before thee the total depravity and defilement of our souls by sin. Shame and confusion of face belong unto us, and we abhor ourselves, repenting in dust and ashes; but whilst we are constrained to cry Unclean, unclean! we rejoice that there is hope of cleansing. We rejoice that Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to purify a people unto himself; and that he gave himself to death for us, that he might wash us from our sins in his own blood. O wash us in that blood!—then shall we be whiter than snow; and deliver us, we humbly beseech thee, not only from the guilt of our sins, but also from their power. We rejoice to read in thy holy word, that from the pierced side of our dear Redeemer issued both blood and water. O that

Christ may be made sanctification unto us! Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew right spirits within us. Thus may we be washed, being both justified and sanctified, and finally presented, with all the church of Jesus, faultless before the throne, with exceeding joy, evermore to praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;—to whom be all honour and glory, world without end! Amen.

SERMON XCVII.—*Faith, Love, and Joy.*

BLESSED Redeemer, thou art the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Thou art, at present, invisible to mortal eyes; but, by the eye of Faith, we see thee in thy word; we believe, and love, and rejoice. Thou hast pronounced a blessing on those who have not seen thee, and yet have believed;—may this blessing be ours!—We desire also to love thee,—to love thee sincerely,—to love thee supremely. O shed abroad thy love in our hearts, and that shall kindle ours!—And may we, if happily delivered from death and danger, rejoice always in thee our gracious Deliverer, with the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory!—And may the blessed period arrive when we shall see thee,—see thee as thou art,—no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face, and so shall we ever be with the Lord! Amen.

SERMON XCVIII.—*Sin odious to God.*

MOST holy God, thy law, thy Gospel, and thy providence, all proclaim thee to be holy; but we are unholy, and sinful creatures. O how abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water! Such a creature, O God, thou mightest justly abhor, banish, and punish: for thy holy word, and all thy dealings with men, prove that thou hatest the workers of iniquity, and art angry with the wicked every day. How merciful, therefore, are the warnings thou hast given us, thy gracious invitations and precious promises! all unite in saying to us, Do not this abominable thing which I hate. Lord help us to hear thy voice, and obey it. Suffer us not to think sin a trifle; but may we hate it as thou hatest it, and *because* thou hatest it. May the blood of Christ cleanse us from all

our past offences; and may the Spirit of Christ dwell in us, to purify our hearts, and sanctify us wholly, that we may serve thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives: and, finally, after this life, attain eternal joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer! Amen.

### Sermon xcix.—*God incomprehensible.*

O thou glorious Majesty of Heaven and of Earth; behold, we who are dust and ashes, have taken upon us to speak unto thee, the Creator and Possessor of the universe. We, finite and sinful mortals, cannot, by searching, find thee out unto perfection; thy works, which our eyes behold, are beyond our comprehension; thy works of providence are often mysterious and unsearchable; and there are depths of wisdom and knowledge in thy holy word which we cannot fully understand: but, O how incomprehensible are thy infinite perfections! thy wisdom, thy power, thy holiness, thy justice, thy truth, and thy goodness, are all beyond our conception! but we bow at thy footstool, we admire, adore, and love! Teach us, holy Father, by thy Holy Spirit, in the use of thy word, to know thee and thy Son Jesus Christ more and more: teach us to do thy commandments with cheerfulness, and to submit to thy rod with patience; and, by beholding thy glory in the person of Jesus Christ, may we be transformed into thy holy image! and, at the appointed season, may we be received into thy presence, to behold thy face, and sing thy praise for ever and ever! Amen.

### Sermon c.—*The Great Harvest.*

Eternal God, thou hast formed the earth for thy glory; and, as it had a beginning, we believe that it will have an end. O prepare us for that awful period, —for that great harvest, when all the inhabitants of the world shall appear before thy dread tribunal!— then will the tares and the wheat, which grew together before, be finally separated. O that we may be found among true believers, at the right hand of the great Judge! Then may we rejoice to hear him say

to us, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

O God, have mercy upon the careless and the carnal, who are now sowing only to the flesh, and must, if thy grace prevent not, reap destruction and misery eternal! Awaken them, O God, to a just sense of their danger, that they may seek thee while thou mayest be found, obtain thy pardoning mercy and grace, to sanctify them in time to come!

We bless and praise thee, O God, who causest the earth to yield its increase, and produce food for our dying bodies! We rejoice with thankfulness in the annual harvest; but O that our joy may be full, when, at the end of time, we, with all the faithful, shall be gathered into the heavenly world, to adore the riches of thy grace throughout the ages of eternity! Amen.

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*Prayer for a Family, or other Assembly, on a Lord's Day Morning.*

O GOD, who hast given us all our time, we thank thee that a seventh portion of it is devoted to thy special service. We welcome the return of the holy Sabbath: we bless thee for the appointment of it: and we earnestly entreat thy blessing upon it. Help us, O Lord, by thy Spirit, to sanctify this day, and to keep it to thy honour and to our great advantage.

By resting this day from our worldly employments, may we be more and more weaned from the world, and prepared to leave it; and by conversing this day with heavenly things, may we be made more and more meet for the engagements and enjoyments of the heavenly world!

We desire to keep this day holy, to the honour of our great Creator, who, when he had finished the work of creation, sanctified this day of rest, in perpetual remembrance of it. We also sanctify this day to the honour of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, after he had finished the great work of our redemption, rose again from the dead on the first day of the week, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with

power, and by which we are begotten again to a lively hope. We sanctify this day also to the honour of the Holy Spirit, who, on the first day of the week, descended to bless the Church, and still abides with it to bless it. We implore his powerful grace this day to render every ordinance a blessing to our souls. By him may we be taught to pray, be assisted to praise, and enabled rightly to understand and receive the gospel of truth! By him may the ministers of the word be powerfully aided in the work of the sanctuary; and may the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted higher and higher in all the churches!

Be present, O Lord, according to thy promise, with all thy worshipping people. Pity those who are detained by sickness, or other lawful hindrances; and pardon those whose carnal minds keep them from thy house.

Display, O God, the power of thy grace this day on the hearts of men! Convince the unconvinced, convert the unconverted, instruct the ignorant, heal them that are of a contrite heart, and build up all believers on their most holy faith.

O that we may be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day! Make us joyful in thy house of prayer! Make this a high day to our souls,—a day of spiritual feasting and holy joy. Take us and ours into thy gracious protection. Bless and preserve us in our going out and coming in. Keep us all the day in thy fear; and at the conclusion of it, may we joyfully and thankfully say, A day in thy courts is better than a thousand!

Hear these our desires, O gracious Father, for thy mercy's sake, in Christ Jesus our Saviour; to whom, with thyself and the Holy Spirit, we ascribe all might, majesty, and praise, for ever and ever! Amen.

### *Prayer for a Family, or other Assembly, on a Lord's Day Evening.*

O Almighty and most merciful God, we desire with humble hearts to draw near to thy throne of grace, in the name of Jesus Christ, our great Mediator and Advocate.

We confess and lament before thee the corruption of our nature, and the many transgressions of our lives.

We have indeed left undone the things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. We have thus made ourselves liable to thy dreadful anger, and to everlasting punishment. O be pleased to give us true and deep repentance, that we may be sincerely sorry for our sins, and grieved that we should have acted so base and ungrateful a part against thee. O may thy goodness lead us to repentance!

We bless and praise thee, O God, that thou hast cast our lot in a Christian land, where we are favoured with the means of grace. We thank thee that we have enjoyed another Sabbath, and that we have once more heard the joyful sound of the Gospel. We rejoice to hear that there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,—that thy dear Son came into the world to save sinners,—that he died the just for the unjust, to bring us back to thee,—and that his blood cleanseth from all sins.

O give us faith to believe thy holy word, to accept thy gracious invitations and to rely upon thy precious promises;—for the sake of thy dear Son, pardon all our sins, and receive us graciously as thy children; and may thy Holy Spirit renew and sanctify our hearts!—May we sincerely hate all sin, especially our easy besetting sins! let them no longer have dominion over us; but may our hearts be purified, our tempers sanctified; and may we become holy in all manner of conversation and godliness! May each of us, in our several stations, adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and may our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

Forgive, we beseech thee, O God, all the sins and imperfections which thou hast seen in our duties this day. Pardon the wanderings of our minds, the coldness of our hearts, and the forgetfulness of our memories. But let not all be in vain. Let our imperfect prayers be answered; let our unworthy praises be accepted; and let not thy holy word be altogether unprofitable; but like good seed, sown in good ground, may it bring forth fruit to thy glory, and to our salvation.

*(Here the short prayer, adapted to the sermon which has just been read, may be introduced.)*

And grant, O Lord, that thy word, wherever it has been dispensed this day, may be made useful. O that thoughtless sinners may be awakened! the careless and secure alarmed! the convinced and humbled be comforted! the wavering be confirmed! the backslider restored! and all thy people refreshed and strengthened! Grant, O Lord, that none of thy ministers may labour in vain, or spend their strength for nought.

Remember, we pray thee, all our relations, friends, neighbours, and countrymen; especially all those who are afflicted in mind, body, or affairs. Give them patience under their sufferings, and in due time a happy deliverance out of all their troubles.

Be gracious, O Lord, to our sovereign King George, and to all the royal family. Bless the government under which we live, and give wisdom and grace to all in authority; and grant that under them we may lead peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

And grant, we beseech thee, that when the days of our appointed time are finished, we may be supported in the hour of death, and be graciously admitted into thy presence, there to keep an everlasting Sabbath, to sing thy praise, and enjoy thy glory, for ever and ever. And this we beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate.

*(The Lord's Prayer may be added at pleasure.)*

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore. Amen.

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## FOR A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

### *Morning Prayer for the Lord's Day.*

*To be used by the Master, Mistress, or one of the Teachers.*

O LORD God Almighty, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this thy holy day, we thank thee for thy merciful protection through the past night. As this is the day which thou hast made—made for thy glory and for our good, be pleased to give us thy Holy Spirit, to help and bless us in all the duties of the day. May it be a true Sabbath; a day of rest from worldly labours and cares; a day of rest from sin; a day of rest in God.

Dispose, O Lord, all who are here present, to hear reverently thy holy word; and suffer them not to give way to carelessness of mind, or to hardness of heart and unbelief. Teach them also to apply the Scriptures to themselves. When they read of thy judgments, may they stand in awe of them: and when they read of thy promises in Christ Jesus, may their hearts be filled with gratitude! and may they take delight in singing thy praises!

And we pray thee, O Lord, to grant unto them the continual help of thy Holy Spirit, that they may be preserved from sin, and may become fruitful in every good work. May they be obedient to their parents and teachers; and may they be temperate, sober, and diligent; may no untruth proceed out of their lips, and may they learn both to command their tempers and restrain their tongues; and may they be kind and merciful to each other, forgiving one another, even as they hope that God, for Christ's sake, will forgive them.

And pardon, O Lord, all their sins in time past, which either in thought, word, or deed, they have committed against thee. Receive, O Lord, all these children into the arms of thy mercy; and grant unto them true repentance, and an unfeigned faith in Christ their Lord.

We also beseech thee to prepare them for all those events which thy providence may see fit at any time to bring upon them. Thou knowest the various trials to which they may be exposed, and the situations to which they may be called. We therefore pray thee to arm them for every trial, and to train them up in the performance of all those duties which thou shalt require of them. May they be grounded in the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ; and may they now begin to fight, under the banner of their Saviour, against the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and as they advance in life may they grow in grace, each of them striving to recommend that Gospel which they have been taught by a holy life and conversation.

And, finally, we pray, that having thus done thy will, and enjoyed thy favour all the days of their lives, they may at length be received into those everlasting habitations which thou hast prepared for them that love thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## *Evening Prayer for the Lord's Day.*

[*To be used by the Master, Mistress, or a Teacher.*]

O LORD God, our heavenly Father, we beseech thee to pour down thy blessing on us, and to grant that the words which we have this day heard with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in all our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruits of good living, to the praise and glory of thy name.

Forgive, O Lord, all the imperfections which thou hast seen in our services this day. Forgive also the various sins of our past lives;—may we repent of them with unfeigned sorrow! and may we lie down this night trusting in Jesus Christ our Lord!

We commit these children to thy watchful care, and to thy mercies in Jesus Christ. Defend them, we pray thee, O Lord, from all dangers, by night and by day; let thy blessing attend them to the end of their lives; and when their bodies shall be laid in the grave, do thou receive their souls into thine eternal kingdom.

We pray thee, O Lord, to give thy blessing to all their friends and relations; grant unto their parents grace to lead a Christian life, and to set a good example to their families, that so they, and the children whom thou hast given them, may meet together in Heaven. Bless the teachers of this school! give them grace both to know their duty and to fulfil it.

We pray for the land in which we live, for the King and all in authority, and especially we pray for all the ministers of the Gospel: give success to their labours on this day. May their preaching be made effectual to the conversion of sinners, and to make them obedient to the will of God!

We would also make intercession for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, for the widow and the fatherless, and for all those who have none to help them. O Lord, bless unto them their earthly troubles, and turn them to their souls' good; and do thou protect and defend them, and appear for them when all human help fails!

We pray also for the whole rising generation;—may they be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Put into the hearts of all parents and teachers a concern for the souls of those over whom

thou hast set them, and give thy grace to the children of this land, that they may hear instruction with a teachable spirit, and may be made wise unto salvation.

And, finally, we pray thee to have mercy on all those who are now living in ignorance and sin, and are without God in the world. Turn them, O Lord, from their evil ways, give them true repentance, and send abroad the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all the world.

These prayers we offer up in the name of our only Lord and Saviour; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end! Amen.

*May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God our Saviour! and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with us this night and for ever! Amen.*

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## *Prayer for a Sunday School.*

Most holy and merciful God, we beseech thee command thy blessing upon this institution; and mercifully grant that the children assembled before thee may not only learn to read thy word, but to understand and obey it; especially assist them by thy Holy Spirit, that they may truly believe in thee and in Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent; and that trusting in him alone for salvation and eternal life, they may be above all things desirous to glorify thy name on earth by a holy and righteous life, and to be fitted and prepared for that state of perfect holiness and happiness which thou hast promised to thy children.

Bless, we beseech thee, the means of instruction here employed; give wisdom and prudence to the teachers, and meekness and industry to the children; and make them duly sensible of the privileges they enjoy in this school, and desirous to improve them according to the wish of their patrons and benefactors.

Bless the parents and friends of these children; [illegible] they at home second the instructions which

they here receive, and not by wicked examples prevent their good effects; and may the parents as well as children have cause to bless thee for the advantages of this school.

[*When any are absent through Sickness.*]

Look in mercy upon any that may be confined by illness; sanctify the affliction to them, and, if it please thee, restore them to us in health and peace.

[*When any Scholars have lately Died.*]

Grant, we beseech thee, that the breach thou hast made be sanctified to those spared, that they may see and consider that they are also exposed to the same; and may they be prepared, by thy grace, to depart cheerfully and happily whenever thou shalt call them!

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## *A General Thanksgiving.*

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but, above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory; and, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we may show forth thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end! Amen.

THE END.

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